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# THE SOVIET-FINNISH CAMPAIGN

MILITARY & POLITICAL  
1939 — 1940

by

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W. P. & ZELDA K. COATES

Foreword by

FRANK OWEN,

EDITOR OF THE "EVENING STANDARD"

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## FOREWORD

The British public were very nearly stampeded, two years ago, into a war *against* the Soviet Union. If it had come, that war would have been approved by many Labour and Liberal leaders who to-day have resumed their former adulation of Russia. And if that war had come, it also would have been fatal either for Britain or Russia, and very probably for both.

As it turned out, it is not easy to assess the gains and losses in the Russo-Finnish War of 1939-40.

The Russians gained some strategic positions, valuable for the defence of the Soviet Union. They locked the gates of the northern harbour of Petsamo against invasion. They occupied Hango (which at the moment of writing they still hold), thus creating for themselves a future Tobruk. They stormed and dismantled the Mannerheim Line, which has now passed once more into the hands of the Finns. By taking these outposts the Russians compelled the Germans, 18 months later, to launch their assault against the Soviet Union from far less advanced and less advantageous springboards.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that the Russians, by their invasion of Finland, forfeited for many vital months the good will of many labour and radical sympathisers the world over. They gave to the dark forces which have always hated and feared the Russian Revolution the opportunity they sought to misrepresent this preventive operation as a blatant and brutal aggression of "Red Imperialism."

What about the Finns? In the Winter War they gained a deserved fame for valour and military skill. But they did lose Hango, Viborg, the Isthmus and the Mannerheim Line. They also lost 60,000 dead, which is as many as the French sacrificed.

The British Government won no medals of any kind. Mr Neville Chamberlain's Cabinet promised the Finns more than they delivered. The amount they delivered was, however, more than they had the right to promise. When we now read in Lord Gort's dispatches that the British Expeditionary Force disposed only 50 fighter planes after two days' battle, we may well inquire what the devil had our rulers been doing in sending 101 planes to Finland two months earlier? We lost 1,000 guns at Dunkirk. We had just made a gift of 114 to the Finns. At Arras and Amiens we lacked anti-tank guns. We had lately presented 200 to Marshal Mannerheim. After the great evacuation of France we had in Britain less than two fully-equipped Regular Divisions and we raised 1,000,000 Home Guards. Until rifles arrived from America these volunteers armed themselves with shotguns and pitchforks. They would have been glad of the 50,000 hand grenades and 10,000 anti-tank mines that we had so recently dispatched to Helsinki.

Now I come to the British Press. Whoever else won prize or credit in the Russo-Finnish War of 1939-40, the newspapers, which are here the subject of Mr. and Mrs. Coates' scorching strictures, were a heavy casualty. Frankly, the writing of British war correspondents in Finland was, as to 95 per cent., ludicrous when it was not simply mendacious. For three months British readers were deluded with fantasies of trapped Red divisions, annihilated Red Army Corps, disgraced and executed Red generals, bombed Finn hospitals, machine-gunned Finn villages, raids of a "thousand planes" (sic) over Finn towns, panics in Leningrad, paroxysms of Stalin in Moscow, ghost Finn patrols skirmishing in Russia, "Lawrences of the North," and such-like idiocies. The Russians were portrayed as barbarians, inept, ignorant and cowardly. The Red artillery was reported to be wild, the Red commissariat hopeless, the Red aviation poor, even the Red soldier was a lout who did not know where he was fighting or why. One Red Division was said to be composed of "Ukrainians, Caucasians, Tartars, Kirghiz, Afghans, Mongolians, Tadzhiks, Karelians and men from Archangel"! Who gave orders to this Guide-book Guard, and in what language the



correspondent did not specify, but the reader may imagine a British Division made up of Cockneys, Aran Islanders, French Canadians, Boers, Ghurkas, Malays, Red Indians and the West African Rifles, and commanded by a Welsh speaking officer from Llangollen.

The undoubted errors of the Red High Command at the outset of the campaign (based primarily on faulty political calculations) were distorted and exaggerated beyond all recognition. Later, no credit was ever assigned to them for their rapid appreciation and correction of their initial mistakes. Thus the improvisational powers of the Red General Staff, and their resilience and resource which enabled the Russians to re-cast their strategy in a remarkably short time and to introduce the required changes in their quartermaster's department, were never recognised in the West. More than anybody else the newspapers' handling of this Russo-Finnish War was responsible for the subsequent universal under-rating of the Soviet military power.

It would be easy to blame the War Correspondents. They worked under immense difficulties of censorship. The Finns, for reasons of military security (and political propaganda), allowed no non-combatant to go to any front. It now transpires that no "War Correspondent" ever saw a battle in Finland or entered a battle zone until the fighting was all over. At the end of the campaign some of them admitted this. It would have been better to have done so long before. The only "battle-news" to be had in Finland apparently was that handed out by the Finnish Military Spokesman. For the rest the "War Correspondents" spent their time travelling the large tract of lake and woodland and snow, vainly seeking copy and being occasionally bombed.

In these circumstances their contributions were quite worthless. The "War Correspondents" received the news of the collapse of the Mannerheim Line with the same astonishment as the British public. Since they had never been within 50 miles of the fighting, how could they grasp which way it was going?



I consider it a serious matter that this situation was not communicated to London and made plain to the public here. For not only the people, but to some extent the Government were misled as to the true state of affairs in Finland. At least one opportunity of mediating between the belligerents was missed by the Cabinet, and the gulf that lay between this country and Russia was thereby left unbridged. Never did the folly of pandering to propaganda instead of digging for the facts come home more rapidly to roost. For 18 months more we went on treating Russia as a bullying (but blundering) aggressor power. Every anti-Russian prejudice, including ignorant contempt for her military quality, got a new start in Britain. For this we must thank those "vivid dispatches from our own Correspondent on the Finnish Front." If Mr. and Mrs. Coates' scathing indictment has exposed and exploded that kind of scab-writing they have done a genuine service to English journalism.

Is it too late—or too smug—to proclaim once again that the supreme duty of newspapers is to print the facts? To do that they must verify their information. Even War Correspondents should try their damndest. A "hand-out" from a Government Department needs verification as much as any other statement or rumour. It is one of the curses of war-time journalism that so much information comes in the form of the official "hand-out." If it cannot be checked, the only safe and honest rule is to state plainly where it came from. After a time the source of the lying communiqué will be recognised, and discounted. I commend to my brother craftsmen the thought that this also will apply to newspapers who do not constantly, and ruthlessly, "root for the truth."

FRANK OWEN.

Fleet Street, November 30, 1941.

## PREFACE

*This book was written before Hitler's treacherous attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. There is seldom much satisfaction in saying "We told you so," but this is one of the very rare occasions when we can say it with the greatest and keenest justification.*

*The conclusions drawn in the following pages respecting the Soviet Government's aims, and the evaluation of her Fighting Forces, have been proved beyond question by the course of events on the Eastern Front, and are now universally acknowledged.*

*As to the Soviet Government's aims in respect of Finland, the Kremlin understood the rulers of Finland, their political antipathies and sympathies thoroughly. Moscow knew that the real Government of Finland was not the Finnish Parliament, but the "Schutz Corps," and that the latter was pro-German and pro-Fascist, and would be a willing tool of Hitler's Germany in the event of a German-Soviet conflict.*

*Further, the Kremlin had no illusions about men like Tanner, the Co-operative leader, and others of that ilk. Even before the German attack on the Soviet Union, these gentry had taken their stand with Hitler, despite the crimes committed by the Nazis against so many countries, including two other Scandinavian countries, viz., Denmark and Norway.*

*It is absolutely true to say that all the insinuations of our Press—with some honourable exceptions—in the early days of the Russo-Finnish campaign have since been emphatically refuted, both by the course of events and the evidence of witnesses. It was alleged that the Soviet Government had become "Imperialist," aimed at annexing the whole of Finland and enslaving its population. In actual fact, as is shown in this book, although it could easily have annexed Finland, it only demanded and obtained a few strategically important districts and did not interfere in the slightest in the political or social structure of Finland. In other words, the Soviet Union occupied important outposts betimes before Mannerheim and Tanner could place them at Hitler's disposal.*

What chance would Leningrad have had to organise its defences, had the Mannerheim Line been in Finnish, that is, in effect, in German hands when Hitler made his treacherous attack on the U.S.S.R.? And the Baltic countries? How long could they have prevented their occupation by Germany had the important strategic points on their territory in the Baltic, as well as those in the Gulf of Finland, not been occupied by the Soviet forces?

The occupation by the U.S.S.R. of all these strategic points gained for the Soviet Union at the very least valuable time to organise her defences in the interior of the country, and forced Germany to spend time and material which she would otherwise have been spared.

Throughout the pages of this book we show how time and again prejudice against the U.S.S.R. coloured nearly all the reports of the fighting in the Soviet-Finnish campaign. But now that the Red Armed Forces have put up such a magnificent resistance to the most powerful military machine of modern times, the injustice (to use the mildest possible word) of these reports is being recognised more and more. Well may the "Evening Standard," referring to the campaign against the U.S.S.R. conducted at that time, characterise it as a "news-paper campaign now revealed as the most irresponsible in British history." It is only fair to add in this connection that the "Evening Standard" itself stood out from the first against direct military aid to Finland against the U.S.S.R.

We ourselves do not claim to be military experts—we could only judge of the progress of the campaign from the purely layman's point of view in so far as it was revealed in the reports and communiqués, and from our knowledge, which in all modesty we can claim to be fairly extensive, of the remarkable abilities of the Soviet leaders and of the great economic and other progress made in the U.S.S.R. since the establishment of the Soviet régime.

In order, however, to give an estimation of the Soviet-Finnish campaign from the purely military point of view we give in Chapter III an analysis of the campaign by two experts. First, a general review of it by Captain Kournakoff, a strategist

*in the Tsarist Army. Secondly, extensive extracts from a publication on the subject by Major A. S. Hooper, who has made a deep study of the Red Army and is a keen judge of military strategy.*

*Before the German attack on the U.S.S.R., it had been repeatedly alleged that Soviet industry, Soviet mechanical skill and Soviet pilots were hopelessly and incurably inefficient. After Lord Beaverbrook and Mr. Harriman had returned, on October 10, 1941, from the British-U.S.A.-U.S.S.R. Conference in Moscow, these unfounded assumptions were blown sky-high.*

*Lord Beaverbrook, in a broadcast which attracted world-wide attention, declared: "What of the Russians? Will they be able to produce munitions for themselves? Yes, certainly! They have good factories with a big output. Captain Balfour, Colonel Lyon, of the American Air Force, and Sir Archibald Rowlands, of the Aircraft Ministry, all members of the Conference, visited factories where aircraft are produced.*

*"All three tell me they place the aircraft and engine factories for efficiency and capacity on the level of performance we have reached in this country and in the United States.*

*"Colonel Lyon tells of the decision to construct an airfield for the reception of the British and American aircraft we have been sending to Russia. A forest was cleared. A swamp drained. A road was driven. Two long and wide runways were built. Yet that airfield was completed within 30 days.*

*"Now you may ask, can the Russians use to the best advantage the weapons made for them at home and abroad, in Britain and the United States? Yes. Their pilots are of the very best. Just as much experienced as any pilots anywhere. And the mechanics who service their aircraft compare in all respects with the mechanics of Great Britain and the United States."*

*And Mr. Harriman was equally emphatic. He stated: "The members of our party inspected a number of factories producing large quantities of munitions of all types. Our*

American airmen had been working with the Russians for the past months, showing them how to fly and maintain American aircraft.

"They all reported the same thing. The Russian has become a first-class mechanic in this last generation. The American tractor on the farm has played its part. Factories are equipped with the finest and latest American machinery, well laid out and well organised. There is no better work done anywhere."

"Out on the airfields, where much has to be done with little equipment, our Army officers report that they have never seen such skill, ingenuity, resourcefulness and morale. The Russian mechanics work without shelter in sleet, rain and wind an average of 14 hours a day." The pilots learn to fly American aircraft as quickly and as skilfully as our own or the British.

"The clumsy Russian moujik has become a skilled mechanic. Russia has learned to use the machine."

Further, when in the last week of October, 1941, it was revealed that the Soviet authorities had achieved the impossible in moving factories to the east, as the German hordes invaded their Western Provinces, the "Times" editorially declared: "The effects of the relinquishment of Kharkow have been mitigated by the previous withdrawal of industrial equipment and of thousands of artisans. Certain details have been known for some time of the very thorough plans adopted to this end, but until now it has not been prudent to make more than passing allusion to them . . . it can be stated that visitors to Russia have been astonished to find how well prepared industrial evacuation has been. All was in readiness to lift up whole shops, pack them in trains or lorries, and carry them back to new sites at least partially ready for their reception, where living quarters had been earmarked or specially provided for the workpeople." [October 31, 1941.]

On this point the leader-writer concluded: "What has been done, what is still being done, is tribute alike to modern Russia's large-scale industrial organisation and to her unflinching determination."

*It was alleged that the Red Army from the point of view of efficiency and equipment could not possibly be compared with a modern army, presumably like the armies of France, Holland, Belgium and the British Expeditionary Force. In actual fact, the splendid morale, the efficient leadership and the modern equipment of the Red Army are now universally acknowledged. Major-General Pope-Hennessy wrote : " It was anticipated that the Russian soldier would show those virtues of courage and devotion that have always distinguished Russian armies in the past ; but there was little in the history of Russian warfare to promise that Russian armies to-day would reveal an organisation and staff work of such high quality as to make the great German rush miscarry and force upon the most formidable war machine the world has ever seen not only great delay, but also a complete recasting of its operation scheme.*

*" Yet that wonder is what we have seen with admiration and respect—and, in this country, we should add, with gratitude. For we owe the Russian Army a debt we have not yet repaid."*  
—[*" Evening News,"* October 10, 1941.]

*The Labour Movement in Great Britain denounced the Soviet Government because of the Soviet-Finnish conflict, and at first characterised the peace terms as harsh. However, after the Finnish Government had finally thrown off the mask and entered the war on the side of Germany, a profound change took place in the Movement's estimate of the Russo-Finnish campaign. To quote one typical example, " Man and Metal," the official organ of the Iron and Steel Trades, stated : " Subsequent events incline one reluctantly to the view that the real mistake Russia made was in being too lenient in her peace settlement. If she had occupied the whole of Finland, as Germany would have done under similar circumstances, it would have been impossible for another German pawn to be used against her."*—[September, 1941.]

*Then turning to Finland's appeal for the sympathetic understanding of the British Labour Movement, the paper continued : " When we are asked for our sympathy our minds turn to the treacherous rape of Norway and Denmark. We think of the unspeakable tragedy of the Poles, and the terrors which they are at present undergoing. We think of the brutal and*



humiliating subjugation of a fine people like the Czechs by German riff-raff. With our eyes riveted on this, what sympathy can we have for the associates of those who have brought this tragedy into the lives of millions of people in Europe to-day?"

As already mentioned, the peace terms offered to Finland by the Soviet Government and finally accepted by the former were the most generous—in comparable circumstances—in human history. They were honoured generously in the spirit and in the letter by the Soviet Government, but violated by the Finns.

Among other complaints made by the Soviet Government of Finnish acts unfriendly to the U.S.S.R., it may be mentioned that early in May, 1941, the Soviet press disclosed that the Finnish Government—in violation of the Soviet-Finnish Treaty—was permitting the German Government to mass troops in Finland in obvious preparation for an attack on the Soviet Union.

At the same time the food situation in Finland was very bad, and Helsinki asked Moscow for help in the way of foodstuffs which was readily given. In Chapter X we reproduce a Soviet communiqué of June 8, 1941, in which it is pointed out that M. Mikoyan, Commissar for Foreign Trade, had informed M. Paasikivi that, taking into account Finland's food difficulties, he had given orders for the despatch of wheat immediately, in spite of the fact that Finland had failed to fulfil her obligations under the Soviet-Finnish Trade Treaty.

The presence of German troops in Finland was of course also a source of anxiety to Britain, and the British Government was soon forced to take action. To quote the "Times": "Early this month it became obvious that German troops were entering Finland in such numbers that the Government of that country could no longer prevent imports into Petsamo from reaching the enemy. From June 14, therefore, all traffic to that port from the west has been suspended. No navicerts will be granted to ships proposing to sail for Finland, and already three Finnish vessels on their way to Petsamo have been intercepted and detained. The decision does not mean that the



*British Government regards Finland as definitely un-neutral, but rather that Finland is not in a position to be truly independent.*"—[June 19, 1941.]

Joint Finnish-German preparations continued apace until, on June 22, 1941, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union. It is characteristic of the relations which had evidently existed between Nazi Germany and the Finnish Government that, although the march of the Nazi hordes on the U.S.S.R. had been sudden, without the formality of an ultimatum, however short, Hitler in his proclamation to the German people the same day (June 22nd) could speak with assurance of Finnish co-operation. In this connection he declared :—

"German people, in this very hour a movement of troops is taking place which in its extent and magnitude is the greatest that the world has ever seen.

"United with their Finnish comrades, the warriors who won the victory at Narvik are manning the shores of the Arctic Ocean. German divisions, commanded by the conqueror of Norway, together with the champions of Finnish liberty, commanded by their Marshal, are protecting Finnish territory." (Our underline.)

The Finnish Government on their side were also at pains to show their solidarity with Hitler. On June 27, 1941, five days after Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union, Dr. Ryti, the Finnish President, in a broadcast to the nation declared : "The Forces of the Greater German Empire, under the command of their leader of genius, Hitler, will now wage a successful battle beside us against the Soviet. We will make any sacrifice for the defence of our country. Our faith in Marshal Mannerheim and our armed forces is unlimited."—["Daily Telegraph," June 27, 1941.] (Our underline.)

These words of Ryti's, without any equivocation whatever, revealed to the world the real mind and sympathies of the rulers of Finland. However, they were no surprise to the men in the Kremlin ; as already mentioned, they knew the Rytis, Tanners, and Mannerheims.

Since then, as is well known, the Finnish Government in spite of several warnings by Britain and the U.S.A., have continued their support—it would be more correct to say subservience—to Hitler. In their reply to the U.S.A. the Finnish Government, with the loud applause of the Nazi and Fascist press, declared that they did not feel themselves threatened by Germany. Naturally! Themselves out and out reactionaries they prefer, like the Quislings of Norway, France, Rumania, etc., that their country should be vassals of Nazi Germany and themselves become Gauleiters than that there should be any risk of the establishment of a real democratic régime in Finland. Hence, the appeals made to the Finns that they are assisting the anti-democratic cause, that they are helping to rivet the chains on their own country's freedom and independence leave the Finnish Government quite cold.

We should like to draw the attention of our readers to one or two points regarding the arrangement of the material in the various chapters. Occasionally a quotation from one or other correspondent which has been given is repeated in another because it is the most suitable to illustrate a special point. In particular whilst giving a few extracts from some Soviet communiqués in earlier chapters, we give them in full in Chapter XI. We have done this advisedly—and not as an oversight—because in the first place the Soviet communiqués were largely ignored in the British Press at the time, secondly, only very few lengthy summaries of the campaign were at any time published by the Soviet High Command or Government, thirdly, they are very informative and worth placing on record.

Finally, we would also draw attention to the fact that in the case of various geographical facts, such as distances, areas in Finland covered by forests, lakes, etc., we have taken every precaution to be accurate in the opening chapter by consulting authoritative works on the subject. But when quoting correspondents and others on the same subject we have, of course, not altered figures which in some cases may not quite agree with those given by ourselves.

W. P. & Z. K. COATES.

## CHAPTER I

### FINLAND : Temperature, Latitude Topography

**I**N order to have a clear conception of the nature and progress of the Soviet-Finnish campaign, it is necessary in the first place to appreciate the conditions of the terrain upon which it was fought.

Finland is a fairly large country. It has an area of 150,000 square miles, i.e. about three times the size of England, but three-fourths of the country is uninhabited and the remaining fourth only sparsely populated; its total population is not more than 3,800,000 souls. As one would imagine with such a relatively large area and small population, its rail and road means of communications are scanty. It possesses only 3,600 miles of railway (compared with 20,200 miles in England), but these were built largely from a military point of view and are of immense strategical importance. In addition it has 20,700 miles of high-road compared with 153,000 miles in England, but it is particularly important to note that the Finnish high-roads were not built to carry heavy motor traffic.

Many military experts have averred that Finland is the easiest country to defend and the most difficult to invade in Europe, and that it was the last country on this Continent which would be likely to succumb to a "blitzkrieg," because of its temperature, topography and latitude, with which we shall now deal.

The winter temperature is exceedingly cold, usually falling to 14 degrees (Fahrenheit) below freezing point. That is very severe in all conscience, but, in addition, the winter of 1939-40 was the coldest in living memory. During the course of the campaign, 30, 50, 60, 70, 80,

90 and even 100 degrees of frost were registered. These figures may cause the average citizen of the temperate zones to shiver, but they would convey little, if any, conception of the intensity of cold which they register. Well might a *Times* correspondent "lately in Finland," referring to a temperature of 50 degrees below freezing point write "unless one has experienced such cold it is hard to realise what it means. It is impossible to touch metal with the bare flesh, and an unprotected hand becomes frostbitten in a few minutes. Ordinary leather boots are no use at all. The feet must be protected with thick felt."—(*Times*, December 22, 1939.) That is at 50 degrees below freezing point. We leave our readers to imagine what from 60 to 100 below freezing point would mean.

Finland has been called "The Land of a Thousand Lakes," but this is a considerable understatement. It is a country of tens of thousands of lakes. In fact, the area of the lakes—about 11.5 per cent.—exceeds that of the cultivated area of the country—about 8½ per cent. However, the country has a remarkable system of rivers and canals connecting the individual lakes and groups of lakes with one another and with the Gulf of Finland, but all these, as well as the waters around the coast, are frozen over from November to April or May.

That is not all—11.5 per cent. of the surface of the country, as just stated, is covered by lakes, but an additional 20 per cent. is covered by impassable swamps and treacherous bogs. In all, 31.5 per cent. of the country is under water. There is nothing comparable with it in any other country in Europe. In addition, "Finland is the most densely-wooded country in Europe."\* No less than 60 per cent. of the face of the country is covered by thick forests.

\* Mr. T. L. Gilmour (Commander of the Order of the White Rose of Finland) in *The Nations of To-day*; published by Hodder and Stoughton.

These facts, we fear, will only give the reader a very incomplete picture of the topography of Finland and of the difficulties that this presents to an invading army, but perhaps a few extracts from the cables of correspondents in Finland will help to fill in some of the gaps.

A *Times* correspondent stated :

" Up to about the middle of January the sky is usually overcast and snow falls almost constantly, covering up all tracks almost as soon as made and making it difficult to keep to the paths that wind through the forests and marshes in the most perplexing way. For this reason it may be imagined that Russian tanks, guns and transport are continually finding themselves ditched ; for there has been hardly severe enough frost yet to allow the marshy country to bear the weight of heavy vehicles."—(*Times*, December 22, 1939.)

A *Daily Telegraph* correspondent cabled that when he was travelling by car along the Petsamo-Rovaniemi highway the chauffeur turned the car off the road " we became almost invisible in the gloom."—(*Daily Telegraph*, December 16, 1939.)

The *Sunday Times* correspondent cabled : " The roads were so slippery that our car skidded into the ditch three times, which delayed us considerably, but gave us a small idea of what the mechanised Russian units were up against."—(*Sunday Times*, February 4, 1940.)

Mr. John Langdon-Davies after having " travelled through Finland from south to north " wrote : " I have passed through hundreds of miles of forest where the visibility is never more than a few yards and where all communication curls round the obstructive lakes and is limited to the few localities where the tortuous water systems can be pierced."—(*Evening Standard*, February 14, 1940.)

And Mr. Geoffrey Cox, describing the roads in Central Finland wrote: "On those roads, with a four-foot snow-filled ditch on either side and beyond that, dark forests providing perfect cover, tanks were worth less than a white sheet. If there is one thing that the Finnish war shows, it is that the tank is no weapon on a narrow road."—(*Sunday Express*, March 31, 1940.)

When storms sweep the country? What then? "Blizzards driving across the Karelian Isthmus and Lake Ladoga" cabled the *Times* correspondent, February 22, 1940, "have come again to the aid of the Finns, in their bitter and gruelling fight to maintain their new positions in the Mannerheim Line. High winds are driving fierce gusts of fine snow across the lakes, bending the pine forests and building up high new drifts. For riflemen visibility has been shortened to a few yards. Riding and ski-ing are reduced to the minimum, and almost every sort of transport is at a standstill."

Daylight was another important factor—a *Times* correspondent in the issue of that journal, December 22, 1939, wrote: "Just now the operations in the far north around Petsamo are for the most part being conducted in darkness; while in the centre, opposite the head of the Gulf of Bothnia, daylight is only a matter of a couple of hours of twilight at midday. In the south the daylight lasts not more than four hours a day."

Soviet Karelia, lying between the Leningrad-Murmansk Railway and the Finnish frontier, is in all respects very similar to the territory of Finland. Finland's Eastern defences were a combination of natural and artificial factors. Her frontier with the U.S.S.R. from the coast of the Gulf of Finland across



the Karelian Isthmus and Lake Ladoga to the Arctic' covered the enormous distance of 750 miles.

Parallel with this frontier (in so far as a zigzag line can be called parallel) ran the Leningrad-Murmansk Railway, but this line was from 45 to 150 miles distant from the frontier and there were no branch lines running towards the latter. In passing, it is very apposite to recall, as the Military Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* reminded us, that during the Finnish Civil War "even small Finnish forces found it impossible to operate at any distance from railways."—(*Daily Telegraph*, December 18, 1939.)

From the northern shores of Lake Ladoga to the Arctic, the frontier did not follow any clearly defined geographical features. It was drawn more or less arbitrarily through dense forests, around and often across lakes, bogs and swamps through very sparsely populated country. It is hardly necessary to add that there were no modern metalled roads along this frontier leading from Soviet to Finnish territory. At most only narrow winding tracks. Mr. Langdon-Davies, from whose articles we have already quoted, did not exaggerate when writing about that frontier he stated: "Interminable forests and innumerable lakes offer no mere frontier obstruction as in most European countries. They deprive the invader of any tangible objective save total devastation in nine-tenths of the country."—(*Evening Standard*, February 14, 1940.)

The remainder of the frontier consisted of Lake Ladoga and the Karelian Isthmus on which the Mannerheim Line had been constructed. This subject is dealt with in a subsequent chapter, but we think it advisable to quote here what the foreign correspondents in Finland cabled to London respecting this formidable



system of defences. Mr. Geoffrey Cox wrote in the *Daily Express*, February 21, 1940: "The Mannerheim Line runs in a great arc across the sixty miles of the Karelian Isthmus that links Finland to Russia. . . . Unlike the Maginot Line, the Mannerheim positions are not a string of great fortresses, the loss of any one of which would rob its defenders of enormous strength. They are rather a series of trench and machine-gun positions ranged behind waves of anti-tank barriers made of granite blocks. Only a small part is formed of concrete gun positions and pill-boxes. The waves of defences stretch right back across the twenty miles from Summa to Viipuri."

It was of the most modern construction. The correspondent continued: "The main line had only just been completed when the war broke out. The pick of the Finnish Army were drafted to defend it. They knew their jobs. The greater part of the Finnish troops had always been trained on the isthmus."

A mere penetration of the outer defences was regarded as of little importance. Thus, *The Times* correspondent cabled: "Even in the unlikely case that the Russians were able to get a hold on some of the advanced positions in the Mannerheim Line, they would still have an almost impregnable chain of strong points to overrun before they were through."—(February 13, 1940.)

It was freely stated that the deeper an attacking army penetrated into this system of defences, the greater would be the obstacles confronting it. To quote *The Times* correspondent: "The second line of the Mannerheim fortified zone is described here as even stronger and better situated for defence than the corresponding part of the first line."—(February 29, 1940.)

Would the outflanking of the Line from the Gulf of Finland be a difficult undertaking? The correspondent continued: "It is also pointed out that the Koivisto forts now abandoned represented only the easternmost part of a system which makes the southern coast of Finland the strongest fortified coast in Europe, and that therefore the loss of Koivisto has only a local significance."

These quotations give some idea of the strength of the Mannerheim Line, and taken in conjunction with all the preceding data will, we think, give some conception of the formidable task facing the Red Army.

## CHAPTER II

### The Reports and Realities of the Campaign

NOW that a year has elapsed since the cessation of Soviet-Finnish hostilities and bearing in mind the geographical facts dealt with in the previous chapter, we can appraise in a calmer atmosphere the sensational and neurotic nonsense cabled from Helsinki, Stockholm, Oslo, Amsterdam, etc., by correspondents far from the battle-front, respecting the Red Army, the general course and conduct of the campaign and the aims of the Soviet Government.

Seldom have the reading public been deluged with such a waterfall of distortions, inaccuracies and unfounded imaginings; as an American publication after a thorough analysis of the press reports remarked: "The Finns won the propaganda campaign, but the Soviets won the war."

In the early stages the correspondents declared (a) that the morale and physique of the Red Army were low; (b) that the leadership was hopeless; (c) that the equipment was antiquated. Also they declared that the Soviet Government had embarked on a war of Imperialist conquest which would extend far beyond the frontiers of Finland. Diplomatic correspondents, leader writers and others apparently swallowed this dope and at first even vied with their colleagues in Helsinki, Stockholm, Oslo, etc., in belittling the Red Army. In passing it may be added that at least some of the journals to which these gentlemen contributed had been singing the praises of the Soviet Fighting Forces some months previously.

Experienced publicists like the late "Scrutator," not only fell easy victims to this Soviet-phobia, but later seemed to have become so intoxicated with their own outpourings that they completely lost all sense of reality. There has been nothing like it since November, 1917, when we were told "by the men on the spot," by "well-informed" Diplomatic correspondents at home and experienced officials at the Foreign Office, that the existence of the Soviet Government was at most a question of days, probably only of hours.

What were the sources of the correspondents' information? Were they day by day on the battle-front observing for themselves? There is no question about the answer. It has been given by the press men themselves. The special representative of the *Daily Telegraph* cabled from Tolvajaervi (Finland), January 2, 1940:

*"For the first time since the Russo-Finnish war began, foreign correspondents have come to Eastern Finland. We have travelled the narrow road from Lake Tolva to Lake Agla, where fighting raged from December 13 to December 23."*—(January 3, 1940.) (our italics.)

Mr. Leland Stowe, an American journalist, wrote on January 30, 1940:

"The first two months of the Russo-Finnish war are completed to-day. They end with all the military victories—including the annihilation of three Red divisions—credited to the Finns, but with the Russians almost complete masters of the air, and with virtually all the long-term advantages in their favour. As on the Western Front, the critical struggle is expected here in March, if not before.

"It is impossible to give a rounded summary of this war's progress to date *since no correspondent knows more than a fraction of what has happened in any sector.* As an example, although I arrived in Finland on December 5,

and although I am one of the few who have visited four out of the five major war zones, I have never yet seen as many as 500 Finnish soldiers in any one place. *In any other war of the century such an anomaly would have been unthinkable, but my case is the general rule and not the exception.*

"This is true for several reasons. First, because forests cover 70 per cent. of Finland and the troops are easily concealed near every front. Also because rearguard garrisons are segregated, with their locations kept secret. Chiefly, however, because the Finnish High Command has taken pains that no correspondent should witness a major engagement, and *not one of us has yet seen a large-scale clash between Finnish and Russian forces.* We have only been permitted to visit scenes of battles like those at Lake Tolva and Suomussalmi after the action had been completed and swung Eastward by several miles.

"Thus it happens that this is an almost unprecedented secret war and what correspondents see is most carefully restricted long before anything they write comes beneath the censor's pencil. As a result, correspondents are rare who have been under fire more than once, even when on the Karelian Isthmus, and there are many who have never had the experience.

"Personally, I have watched only one artillery bombardment (this from a relatively safe position on the Eastern side of the Isthmus). Since that mid-December day, I have never been within hearing distance of rifle or artillery fire. I have heard the explosion of Russian aerial bombs, and that is all.

"Of course, the Finnish High Command has its own reasons for these restrictions, and perhaps the foremost is Field-Marshal Baron Carl Gustave Mannerheim's method of waging war with an absolute secrecy of strategy—the natural tendency of the Finns to trust no one but themselves. *It is also evident that Finnish losses and casualties have been systematically masked.*"—(Quoted by Tribune, March 1, 1940.) (Our italics.)

Mr. George L. Steer cabled from Helsinki, February 16, 1940: "By the end of this week the Isthmus offensive will have been raging for a fortnight—an eventful fortnight which gives one a mental landscape to look back upon. *I have not been to the front, nor has any other journalist, during that time.*"—(*Daily Telegraph*, February 17, 1940.) (Our italics.)

The Special Correspondent of the *Sunday Times*, Virginia Cowles, cabled from Helsinki, March 9, 1940:

"No foreign correspondent here in Finland is allowed to visit any front whatsoever when a battle is taking place. All correspondents have been barred from the Isthmus for over a month now. They must rely for their news on the official communiqué which is handed out in Helsinki each evening. The communiqué on land operations averages about 150 words; anything more that is written about the actual fighting, therefore, must be conjecture."—(March 10, 1940.)

Mr. Edward Ward, the B.B.C. News Observer summed up his impressions thus:

"My job in Finland for the last two and a-half months was to broadcast eye-witness accounts of the war . . .

"It was a curious war to cover. Old-timer war correspondents say it was the only war in which they have never been allowed to see a major battle in progress."—(*Radio Times*, April 5, 1940.)

Much more in the same strain could be quoted, but we think the above extracts are sufficient.

Before proceeding further, it will be worth while to turn aside for a moment and recall some forgotten facts in connection with the last campaign in these latitudes, viz., the Allied invasion and occupation of Northern Russia in 1918 and 1919. The Allied troops were engaged in the winter of 1918-19 in holding the Archangel-Murmansk front against the Red Army.



The difficulties of campaigning in this period of the year were so severe that the British Generals in command (on the authority of Sir Henry Wilson's report to the Cabinet) were instructed as autumn drew to a close *to adopt a purely defensive attitude*. Mark these words "a purely defensive attitude." The anticipated weather and temperature conditions usual in these latitudes were the compelling factors.

Sir Henry Wilson's report continued: "The severe nature of the climate is well-known to the War Cabinet. During the next few months temperatures of many degrees below zero, with frequent snow blizzards, have to be faced. Foreseeing these conditions the War Office have made such provision as has been possible in the time available for the health and comfort of the troops." It is pertinent to keep these facts in mind when considering the course of the Soviet-Finnish conflict.

Now it is a truism, well known to students of military history, that the outside world never learns the truth about any military campaign until long after it is over. This still holds good to-day. To quote that well-known military expert, Capt. Liddell Hart:

"Twenty years of exploring the history of the last war, after taking part in it, have taught me that events as they actually happened are very different from the picture of them that is formed, or given, at the time.

"That process of uncovering the facts has also left me with no illusions about the *veracity of official sources in any country at war*. Always and everywhere, the ruling idea is not to admit more than cannot be concealed."—(*Sunday Express*, February 25, 1940.) (Our italics.)

This was still more so in the case of the campaign in Finland. Capt. Liddell Hart continued:

"There is, too, a special factor which complicates the process of reaching true military conclusions about the



Finnish campaign. This factor is the deep-seated prejudice against 'Communism' which prevails in most countries—for nothing closes up the average man's mind more firmly than affixing a coloured label to the subject under consideration.

"Soldiers, too, tend to judge Russia's army by a standard which would not be applied to armies with which they had more feeling of professional kinship, *and to regard any failure of its plans as confirmation of its fundamental inefficiency.*"—(Our italics.)

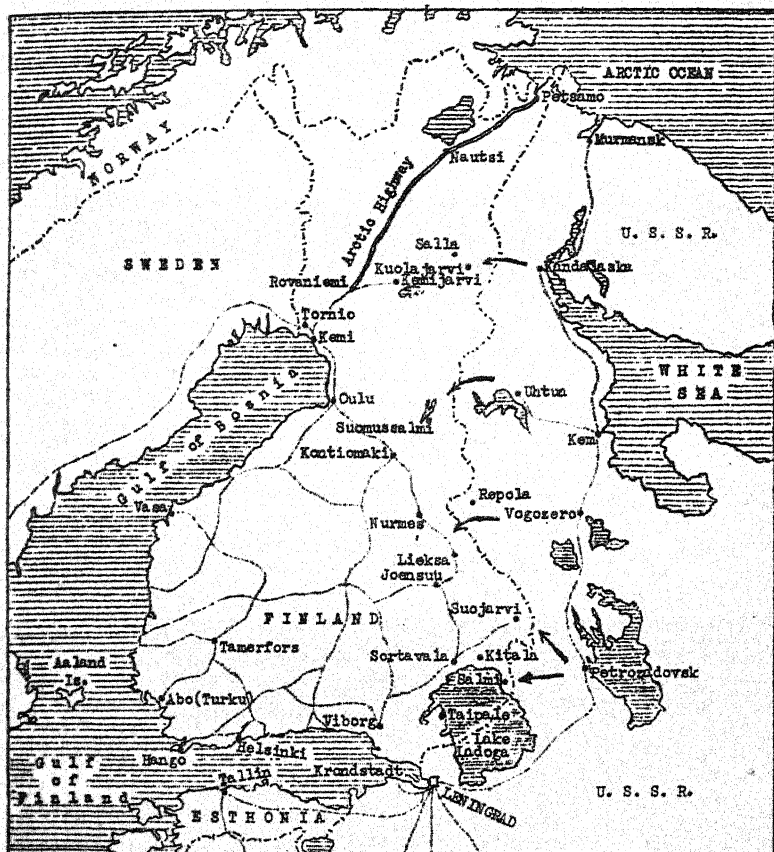
It is true that the conflict in Finland was no "blitzkrieg." No responsible person in the Soviet Union ever expected it would be, the stark realists in the Kremlin were fully cognisant of the great difficulties confronting them. We would underline this fact, because the press in this and other countries repeated almost daily, without advancing any proof, that the Soviet authorities expected at most a few weeks of hostilities. Moscow anticipated nothing of the kind. Why should it? It understood the geography of Finland and knew all there was to know about past campaigns in that country.

A statement published in the Soviet Press early in the campaign declared:

"The territory of Finland presents most serious difficulties for the movements of troops. The lack of roads and rugged terrain, impassable forests, innumerable lakes—divided by innumerable isthmuses spanned by several lines of defences consisting of concrete gun and machine-gun emplacements with concrete refuges for troops—these are the conditions hindering the rapid advance of the troops on Finland's territory. Finland was building these fortifications for four years with the aid of three foreign States which fought among themselves for influence in Finland as the base for an attack on Leningrad and later on Moscow.

"In its defence power this system of artificial fortifications, as for instance, on the Karelian Isthmus, reinforced by Finland's natural conditions, *is in no way inferior to the defence power of the fortified Siegfried Line* of the Western frontier of Germany, against which the Anglo-French troops, during four months, have not made the slightest progress. The Red Army knew of these difficulties in Finland and therefore never expected to annihilate the Finnish troops by one lightning blow."—(Our italics.)

This lucid statement proves conclusively that the Kremlin had no illusions as to the difficulties confronting their forces in Finland.



Railways ————  
 Road ————  
 Frontiers - - - - -

English Miles  
 0 50 100 150 200

### CHAPTER III

## A Military Analysis of the War in Finland

Here is an analysis of the campaign given in the course of an article by Captain Sergei N. Kournakoff.

*THE nearest point on the old Finnish-Soviet border was only some sixteen miles distant from Leningrad ; a modern heavy field gun could bombard the city from Finnish soil.*

The Soviet naval position in the Gulf of Finland was badly compromised. The fortress of Kronstadt, guarding the sea approaches to Leningrad, was part of a system of forts. When Finland received its independence from the hands of the Soviet Government, the forts on the northern shore were turned over to the Finns. Thus Kronstadt's right flank was left hanging "in thin air," and exposed to bombardment. Further, the chain of islands strung through the Gulf also were in obliging Finnish hands. From these islands one could not only see through but also shoot through the Baltic Fleet.

Finally, the outer naval position was wide open, its southern "anchor," Dagö Island, in Estonian hands and its northern buttress, Hangö, held by the Finns.

The "Hoffman Plan" of the German General Staff for a Baltic march on Leningrad, cherished ever since 1918, was always in the offing.

Elsewhere along the Finnish-Soviet frontier things were no better. The Murmansk railroad, later reinforced by the Stalin Canal to the White Sea, the

U.S.S.R.'s line to the open sea (both the Baltic and the Black Sea being nothing more than bathtubs very easily plugged) ran parallel to a potentially hostile border for a length of over 700 miles.

Sixty miles from the Soviet naval base of Murmansk lay the well protected fjord-port of Petsamo, which Soviet Russia had given to Finland together with its independence (Petsamo or Pechenga had never belonged to Finland; it is purely a Russian district, colonised by Novgorod traders centuries ago). *Petsamo, in the hands of a great naval power, would endanger the entire Soviet Arctic.*

Such was the strategic situation on the northern third of Soviet Russia's 2,000-mile western border.

### FORTIFICATIONS

Immediately after a manner of peace was established in 1922, the Finns began to fortify their border, the British General Sir Walter Kirke directing the work with sundry assistance from Sweden, and—strangely enough—from Germany.

The fortifications on the Karelian Isthmus were ready only in 1939, up to which time they were being continuously strengthened. *There is no doubt that this fortified zone, christened after Baron Mannerheim, included a number of improvements over both the Maginot Line and the German West Wall.* Roughly speaking, these fortifications consisted of an advanced zone three to eight miles deep along the Soviet border, containing pillboxes and blockhouses equipped with machine guns, anti-tank guns and field artillery, and guarded by tank traps, barbed wire and land mines.

A second zone—the main one—ran in a wide arc from its western "anchor," Koivisto fortress, across Lake Muolaa, across the Vuoksi waterway, along the

latter and along Lake Suvanto and the short Taipale River to its eastern "anchor"—the fortress of Taipale and Lake Ladoga.

This zone was narrower along the eastern or river sector (about two miles) and much wider (about six or seven miles) in the centre and on the gulf sector. It consisted mainly of ferro-concrete fortifications armed with heavier artillery, each fort capable of independent defensive action. The larger forts measured some 30 by 50 feet with walls five feet thick, often protected with armour plate, and imbedded in the ground to depths reaching 25 feet. All were protected by traps, mines, wire and trenches.

The important railroad junction of Viborg (Viipuri), with its five railroad lines, was protected by a special fortified zone (the third zone) some 25 miles in circumference. Further west were two more separate fortified zones—Helsinki and Abo (Turku).

In the east, the Mannerheim-Kirke Line had another section running from Sortavala on Lake Ladoga north-east to Suojärvi and covering the Isthmus fortified zone as well as the "rockade"-line Sortavala-Joensuu-Nurmes-Uleaborg.

This entire system of fortifications was built on the "Siegfried" rather than the "Maginot" principle, i.e. as a deep belt of independent forts, designed to cushion the thrusts of the invader, and on the other hand, to give its garrisoning troops wide and deep manœuvring space. It was a typical defensive-offensive system as contrasted with the purely defensive French system. It was intended not for defence only, but to serve also as a "retrenched camp" for the concentration of an offensive force.



## THE COUNTRY

The area of Finland is about 150,000 square miles, only a few hundred square miles less than Poland. About 60,000 lakes cover 11.5 per cent. of that area. These, as well as numerous rivers, marshes and low but very rocky ranges covered with dense forests make Finland, especially in the central and southern parts, a country of endless *défilés*, or bottlenecks; easy to defend, but offering serious obstacles to an attacking force. *The entire length of the eastern border is protected by a hilly, wooded and rocky and roadless wilderness.*

The majority of the 3,800,000 inhabitants live in the southern half of the country; the north is sparsely populated. *The climate is rigorous, the mean snowfall considerably exceeding the maximum depth through which troops can move.* This winter a 70-year record was broken with the temperature on the central front tumbling to 60 and 70 below freezing point.

## THE ARMED FORCES

With a population of 3,800,000 and a "mobilisation potential" of about 15 per cent., the Finns mustered about 600,000 men. This included the regular peacetime army of about 30,000 highly-trained men, really forming cadres for a future fully mobilised force, and about 200,000 men of the Schutzcorps organised by Mannerheim in 1920, immediately after the Finnish Civil War, and closely resembling the Nazi S.A. troops. The composition of the Schutzcorps is of a distinct class character, its units being mostly recruited among the well-to-do landed families. The corps has its women's auxiliary—the "Lotta-Svaard," numbering about 80,000 girls performing military duties in the rear.

## ARMAMENTS

The Finnish army was quite lavishly equipped, its artillery, especially the anti-aircraft and anti-tank

branches, being of Swedish Bofors make. The lavishness of the Finnish equipment can be judged by the fact that the Bofors Armament Works established a branch factory in Central Finland, quite a compliment to an army of 30,000.

The Finnish air force counted about 150 planes in 1938, with aerodromes built to accommodate about 2,000 machines, indicating that Finland expected some "guest-fleet" or other. These expectations have not been fully realised, but it is safe to assume that the Finnish air force was quadrupled since December 1.

Chamberlain, in his March 19 speech, admitted having sent 101 planes; the French press admitted that 179 planes had been sent; the Swedish press stated that Swedish planes to the extent of a fifth of Sweden's total air force had been contributed. Italy's and Franco Spain's contribution of planes were also substantial. Similar heavy contributions in armament and munitions from these and other sources have been admitted.

A unique feature of Finland's military establishment was the existence of special military detachments complete with tanks, river gunboats, armoured cars and even planes, equipped and maintained by the larger industrial concerns, lumber-mills, pulp works, textile mills, etc. These outfits would turn the Iron and Coal Police (U.S.A.) green with envy, and their existence accounted, at least in part, for the political quiet prevailing in the Finnish rear.

## WAR INDUSTRIES

Finland's war industries were quite considerable. During the period of 1920-30, two armament factories, two munition works, an aeroplane plant and a powder factory were built. During the last few years a government shipbuilding works was established, while private

shipyards had been enlarged. In addition to the Bofors armament works, already mentioned, a munitions factory was completed in 1937. There is a chlorine plant in Bjorneborg, and a nitrogen plant near Uleaborg.

A large air base is located in Immala, another one near Kemi, in the north. The main aerodromes are to be found in Turku, Helsinki, Tampere and Marienham, (Aaland Islands).

Great electric power plants in Imatra and along the length of the Vuoksi supplied the metallurgical and chemical plants of that area.

## TRANSPORTATION

*The building of new railroads during the last two decades was closely linked with the plans of the Finnish General Staff. On the Karelian Isthmus four lines ran to the Soviet border. In Central Finland five trunk lines ran from the Gulf of Bothnia to the eastern border.*

The Far North was linked to the rest of the country by a single highway (from Petsamo to Kemi, near the Swedish border), which joins the railroad line at Rovaniemi. The network of railroads in central and southern Finland gave the Finnish army the great advantage of operating along good inner lines of communication.

*In contrast, the Soviet Union had only the Murmansk railroad, running 100 miles along the Finnish border, for the supply of the entire eastern front. For the Isthmus front, there was the Leningrad bottleneck with only one bridge across the River Neva.*

## THE CAMPAIGN OF THE RED ARMY

The campaign of the Red Army went through four distinct phases.

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The first called for the immediate neutralisation of danger points: occupation of Petsamo, pushing the border 35-40 miles away from Leningrad, and occupation of the Gulf Islands. This was done in the opening week. There followed an advance from Petsamo of about 80 miles. From the eastern frontier three columns pushed west, one toward Rovaniemi, another toward Uleaborg, a third toward the same goal by way of Nurmes. North of Lake Ladoga Red Army units penetrated some 50 miles westward. Accomplished in the first three weeks under circumstances never encountered before, this first modern mechanised campaign in the Arctic was a great achievement.

In the second phase, the record breaking winter made operations virtually impossible. But the advances were consolidated except for the central column which apparently met with a local reverse (losing one battalion) and withdrew from its advanced position but dug in, still on Finnish soil. Communication lines in the wilderness were strengthened. Pressure on the Mannerheim Line was kept up (no attempt at a break-through) *as a holding operation to keep Finnish troops from being shifted north.*

About January 13, with the clearing of the weather, the third, or air phase began, a systematic but highly discriminate bombardment of the entire Finnish military establishment—war industries, railroads, ports, fortresses and aerodromes. This phase, lasting nearly a month, *could have been shortened by about two weeks, if the Soviet airmen had bombed indiscriminately.* By taking care to bomb only military objectives, they lost two weeks' time but saved tens of thousands of lives of the civilian population. This is indicated by the negligible number of civilian casualties charged by Finnish reports themselves.

Fourth phase: On February 11, the Red Army moved against the main zone of the Mannerheim Line after a shattering artillery preparation. Such was the power of the fire that ferro-concrete blockhouses were uprooted bodily and thrown out of alignment, their guns losing their ability to fire. This artillery preparation was the "aimless wasting of shells" upon which the "typewriter generals" directed their scorn.

Generally speaking, the front can be divided into four sectors. On the eastern side of the Isthmus was the river sector along the Taipale, Lake Suvanto and the Vuoksi, some 35 miles long as the crow flies. Here the Red Army simply kept up moderate pressure, to "rivet" the Finnish reserves and prevent their despatch to other sectors. The right central sector, between the Vuoksi and Lake Muolaa, was ten miles of heavily wooded and hilly country. A heavy blow fell here, with the Red Army driving through the fortifications, across the Valkjärvi-Viborg railroad and northwest along the Vuoksi, passing to the east of Viborg. By March 1 the Red Army already occupied the station Attali on the Viborg-Sortavala railroad.

On the left central sector, between Lake Muolaa and Summa, the Red Army drove straight at Viborg, cracking the Mannerheim Line, storming the Viborg fortified area proper, and occupying Viborg station on March 2.

In the western sector, between Summa and the Gulf of Finland, the Red Army first passed the Fortress of Koivisto, then surrounded it, and finally captured it. It then drove across the frozen bay, capturing fortified islands in rapid succession, outflanking Viborg from the southwest and establishing a firm foothold on the western shore of the bay, March 4.

There was no necessity to rush the city of Viborg in view of the pincer-character of the operation.



On March 7 there began a series of demonstrations on other sectors, viz. : in the Far North the Red Army drove southward to capture the town of Nautsi, and on Lake Ladoga a series of islands flanking that sector were captured. This, of course, was done to prevent the Finns from concentrating all their reserves on the Isthmus. On March 10 lively infantry action started north of Lake Ladoga (the Loimola region).

On March 11 the ring around Viborg was closed by the Red Army.

On March 12 the Soviet army communique simply said : " Nothing of importance happened at the front." . . . Finnish resistance had collapsed.

### THE PEACE TREATY

On March 13 hostilities ceased after the signature of the peace treaty in Moscow. (Two hours before the deadline Viborg fell.)

The Treaty is a typical instrument of peace, not of conquest. This is apparent from its military features, which are the following : in the Far North the Soviet Union—being, by the way, in a position to demand almost anything—did not ask for the rich nickel mines, but demanded only two barren pieces of the Rybachi and Sredni peninsulas which command the entrance to the Fjord of Petsamo. Thus that sheltered harbour—an ideal naval base—is snugly locked against any hostile naval force.

On the eastern border, near the Arctic Circle, the Soviet Union gets a strip of mountainous country. Riches ? None. Just a divide commanding the watershed of the Kemi River which runs towards the Swedish border, enabling the Red Army to keep an eye on any suspicious moves from that quarter and quickly to take



appropriate action. Here the border is pushed away from the Murmansk railroad which is to be linked with the line Kemi-Rovaniemi-Kemijärvi.

In the southern Karelian sector the border has been pushed away from Leningrad about 85 miles and the entire Mannerheim Line (or what is left of it) is taken over by the Soviet Union, including the important railroad, Suojärvi-Sortavala-Antrea-Viborg, with all its branch lines, leaving (as far as we know) the line Lappeenranta-Imatra-Elsinvaara to the Finns. Thus the Karelian menace to Leningrad has instead become a protective outpost. Its loss to Finland renders her much less useful as a doorway to aggression against the Soviet Union.

The town of Viborg with its elaborate railroad junction and port is also taken over, together with all the islands in the Gulf of Finland, thus ensuring the inner naval position protecting Kronstadt. The outer naval position is secured by the lease of the Hangö Peninsula which, together with the island base leased from Estonia, closes the great naval door to any hostile fleet.

Thus we see that it was not exploitable wealth that has been wrested from a defeated foe—but outposts securing the peaceful work of both the Soviet and Finnish people who would certainly gain nothing from the game of chestnut-pulling for the benefit of others.

### GENERAL DEDUCTIONS

The developments of the Soviet-Finnish campaign seem to bear out the following military observations :

1. It being an axiom of military science that an attacking force must normally outnumber its enemy by 2 : 1 to 5 : 1, the steady advance of the Red Army which had pitted in the field some 600,000 men against an equal number of Finnish troops, is a surprising military achievement.

2. The aerial assault on military objectives as carried out by the Soviet air force does credit to its personnel, methods and *matériel*. All the early canards about bombing of civilians have been conclusively repudiated by facts.

3. The single railroad line feeding the 700-mile front has functioned with precision; the Leningrad junction with its single bridge has kept up with the colossal demands made upon it by the Karelian offensive—proving that Soviet railroads function with great efficiency.

4. The original plan of the Soviet General Staff to cut Finland in two at the waist, was thwarted by an unexpected turn in the weather. Great credit belongs to the Red Army General Staff for the flexibility of its planning.

5. Whilst neither the French nor the Germans dared to attack each other's fortified lines (the Maginot Line was not pierced), the Red Army confidently advanced against the Mannerheim Line and broke it by frontal assault, the first such break-through in modern military history.

6. While the press and the radio up to the last days of the war were insisting that disaster was befalling the Red Army "north-east of Lake Ladoga" practically every day, we now learn that the front there was sufficiently stable to *permit the construction of an 80-mile railroad line running from Petrozavodsk to Suojärvi, the completion of which was announced to the Congress of the Supreme Soviet by Andrei Zhdanov.*†

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† At the VIth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., March-April, 1940.

This new railway connects Petrozavodsk, the capital of Karelo-Finnish Socialist Soviet Republic, and the Murmansk Railway with the main line of the Sortavala-Viborg Railway.

M. Zhdanov also announced in the same speech that a railway line from Kandalaksha to Kuolajarva was being constructed and nearing completion.

No mean achievement for the engineers of the Red Army !

To the analysis of the campaign given by Captain Kournakoff we would add that other men well versed in military affairs took a somewhat different view of the fundamental strategy pursued by the Red Commanders.

In this connection we draw attention particularly to an admirable pamphlet by Major Hooper\* entitled *The Soviet-Finnish Campaign*, from which we give some extracts below.

After a close study of the campaign, Major Hooper came to the conclusion that the Red Command decided from the outset that it was essential for them to take the Mannerheim Line, but to do so under the given circumstances it would take the Soviets two months to bring up the necessary supplies and troops. This would leave a little under two months for the storming of the Mannerheim Line and the completion of the campaign, for it was essential that the latter should be concluded at latest towards the end of March; otherwise the Spring thaws would put an end to further effective fighting for months, thus affording France and Britain an opportunity not only to send heavy reinforcements to Finland but also, in all probability, to make a direct attack on the U.S.S.R. via Sweden in the North as well as in the South on the Soviet oilfields. We show in other chapters that such plans were indeed being advocated both in Britain and France. Major Hooper, in the above-mentioned pamphlet—and it is interesting to note that he had maintained this view during the actual progress of the campaign—contended that the

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\* Procurable from Collett's Bookshops : London, Glasgow and Manchester ; Price 3d.

attack on the "waist-line" of Finland from the Eastern frontier was a feint. To quote his own words :

"These attacks (on the waist-line) were to draw off as many Finnish reserves as possible and to keep them occupied, and also to deceive the enemy as to the direction of the main offensive. If the deception was carried out properly the Finns would have great difficulty in relieving the exhausted front line on the Karelian Isthmus when the big and continuous attack was opened there.

"The further the Finns were drawn from their railheads in the northern regions, the harder it would be for them to extricate themselves from the fighting. But the key of the plan was that these attacks must appear so real and the threat so imminent that the deception could be kept up for two months.

"Two immediate preliminary actions were needed to operate this plan. The first was to take the forward zone of the Mannerheim Line in order to remove the artillery and air threat against the Soviet base at Leningrad and to provide space for the amassing of the forces for the great attack. The second was to take Petsamo, the only port the Finns possessed in the Arctic north, to prevent the possibility of intervention by a naval power."

The first of these preliminary moves was carried out swiftly "by December 6 this zone was occupied by the Red Army and two days later this army was in contact with the second zone, the main defence system of the Mannerheim Line." The casualties in this action were relatively few and were mostly caused by land-mines and tank-traps laid by the Finns. "The Red Forces then proceeded to contact and search for any weak spots in the main zone. This fighting pressure had to be kept up, for in no other way could be obtained the vital information of the weak points of the Mannerheim Line and this was essential for the final plan of the main assault."

Further, in the first few days of the fighting Petsamo and the nickel mines to the south of that port were captured. In this operation the Red Army used light tanks specially built for use in the snow and employed searchlights for the 23 hours of darkness. At the same time the Red Army succeeded in its object "to draw off as many of the enemy forces as possible up the arctic highway and keep them occupied far from their base. This Red Division was intended to appear as a threat to the "waist-line" railway to Sweden, and this it evidently succeeded in doing for the fighting moved back and forth some 60 miles south of Petsamo to Nautsi, throughout the campaign."

After describing the various thrusts of the Red Army towards Salla, Suomussalmi, Lieksa, Salmi and Pitkaranta, Major Hooper again stressed :

"Now Meretskov's plan was to make these thrusts, feigning to cut Finland in two, appear so real that the Finns would use their reserves and keep them in those areas in the north long enough for the main offensive on the Mannerheim Line to develop, at the end of January. Subsequent events show how successful the plan was. Even after the main offensive on the Karelian Isthmus had begun in February, some military correspondents in England still thought this offensive was a feint, and that the real weight of the offensive would come through these thrusts for the Finnish 'waist-line.'

"In order that these feint attacks should not lose in vitality, it is probable that only the commanders of each force were informed of the true intentions. This would prevent the thrusts from being faint and half-hearted and thus failing completely in their purpose.

"The Finnish High Command at once despatched some reserves from the south to meet these threats, and a war of movement swayed to and fro on the different lines of advance for some days with varying successes. But the Red Forces maintained their positions on the previously



named places and consolidated them for further advances. Forward detachments were pushed out in all directions. The Finns counter-attacked, but in spite of these, Red pressure was maintained all the time and even occasional advances were made."

The Finns, as the Soviets desired, feared the waist-line threat most of all and appeared to be feeling jubilant that the Soviet thrust here was being held. Their only anxiety seemed to be the apparent possibility that the Soviet forces might turn the Mannerheim Line on the Northern shore of Lake Ladoga.

Dealing with the fighting in the Soviet Northern thrusts, Major Hooper drew attention to an interesting and very important point. He said :

"The Red Army has been criticised for using heavily mechanised forces in such a climate and on such unsuitable terrain. There would appear to be some justice in this, in view of the comparatively heavy losses of tanks in these northern thrusts. But it may well be the fault lay not so much in the use of this form of warfare as the failure of the fuel in such climatic conditions. The Red authorities had had vast experience in all their great projects in the Arctic and at the Pole, of the need for 'doctoring' oil and petrol for aeroplanes and land machines. If they had taken the average temperature of these parts for the last 50 years, they would have 'doctored' their fuel supply for a temperature of 25 degrees below zero. But when in this late December it dropped a further 25 degrees this special fuel would fail. The fuel 'doctored' to this new condition would be neither at their base nor railhead and could never be brought up from Murmansk or Leningrad in time. This would account for the sudden immobilising of their tank columns, thus leaving them an easy prey to the guerilla tactics of their Finnish infantry opponents. This failure to be prepared for the exceptional weather may be the reason, if not the excuse, for the losses. But it does not prove that the use of mechanised forces here was wrong. It was the vital part of the Red Army plan



to give the impression of real weight in these thrusts, and mechanised units, not just infantry, were an imperative part of the plan. The losses naturally increased the elation of the Finns and so tended to aid Meretskov's plan of deception."

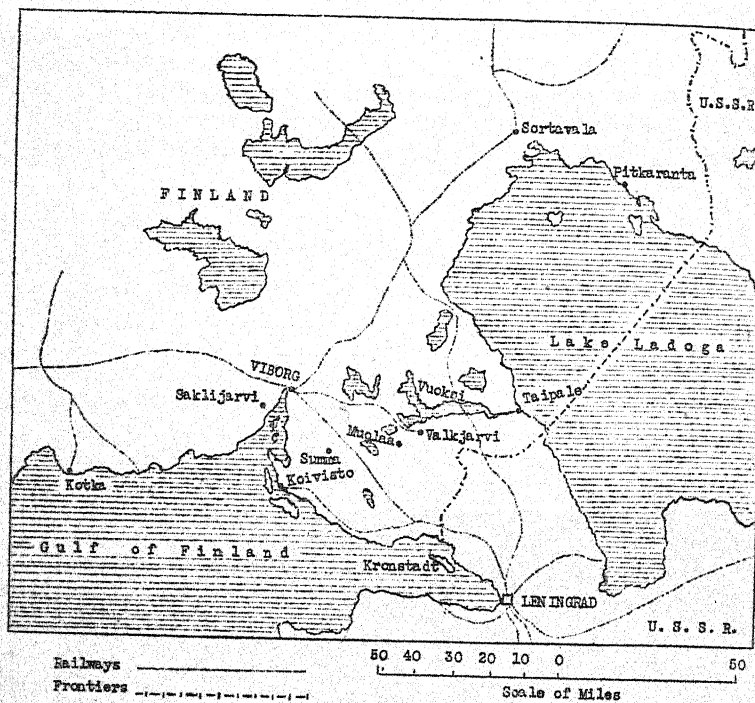
In the meantime, the Red Forces were continuing their search for the weakest spots on the Mannerheim Line and between the end of the first week in January and February 22, the Red Air Force "launched a series of continuous attacks on the lines of communications of the Finnish armies. This included all military objectives behind the enemy lines," and continued Major Hooper :

"Even up to the end of January military correspondents in England were still using the term 'cutting Finland in two' and were still under the impression that the main danger to Finland was from these thrusts. Meretskov's plan of concealing the true direction of his main blow was evidently succeeding.

"In the last days of January he put the finishing touch to the deception by staging a vigorous attack with his 18th Red Division and the 54th Red Tank Brigade along the north shore of Lake Ladoga. The fierce, six-day battle which took place confirmed the impression of the Finnish High Command that the Red Commander was shirking an issue on the Mannerheim Line itself and was trying to turn it from the north. Mannerheim sent some reserves to deal with this move of the Reds and the fighting went on in this battle for many days in February, with considerable success for the Finns, even during the great offensive of the Red Army on the Karelian Isthmus. The two divisions sent up from their reserves by the Finns were desperately needed later on."

At the beginning of February the main Soviet attack on the Mannerheim Line started in earnest and this is the way that the Major described it :

"On February 2, 1940, after a heavy bombardment of artillery, supplemented from the air, the full weight of the



infantry attack was launched on the Finnish right centre sector of the Mannerheim Line, the Summa front, on a width of some ten miles. Tanks and troops advanced under a heavy smoke-screen. Infantry used armoured sledges, 9ft. long and 6ft. wide with machine guns, and these were pushed forward over the snow by tanks. 130 heavy bombers and many pursuit planes co-operated. Such positions as the Red troops managed to gain had to be consolidated by blasting the frozen ground with dynamite, for the digging of the new trenches was impossible. This was the first action in which British bombing planes were used on the side of the Finns . . . ."

The Finns now, at last, realised the significance of the Red strategy, but it was too late and too difficult for them to transfer their troops from the North to the Mannerheim Line. Major Hooper continued :

" On February 3, in a temperature of 30 degrees below zero, the Red attack was resumed after a six-hour barrage of artillery. Day after day these attacks continued, apparently without a hitch, until the line of the Finns started to sag, to be dented, to crumble. Always the main weight was on the same Summa sector, though all the time along the whole Mannerheim Line, heavy pressure of artillery and infantry was kept up. Especially was this so on the left sector of the Finns at Taipale, for this was the hinge which had to be pinned down to its position and held there throughout the whole offensive. On all the northern fronts the Red Forces kept active, but on the north shore of Lake Ladoga the Finns attacked with vigour and success the Red 18th Division and the tank brigade with it. However, not even the defeat of these units could divert Meretskov from his purpose—the destruction of the Mannerheim Line."

From February 8 onwards, the Red Army made steady and ever increasing progress, never slackening the speed and strength of their attack.

" By rapid following up, the Red Forces gave no respite to the Finns. The pressure was relentless. On

February 19, the Red Army was within four miles of Viborg, while their left wing had reached the coast of Viborg Bay, thus cutting off the powerful coastal fortress of Koivisto, which was now surrounded. This strong right guard of the Mannerheim Line surrendered on February 21. While the whole swing of the left of the Red attack was now sweeping up to the gates of Viborg, the Red right still pinned the Finnish forces at Taipale to their ground. The object of this pinning was to keep attacking sufficiently strongly to prevent the enemy retiring and extricating himself but not strong enough to drive him back. This would allow for the wide enveloping movement of the Red left. Some local successes were gained by the Finns on the other fronts, but these were of little value now that the crisis was reaching its climax on the vital Mannerheim front."

At the same time, as in their victory over the Japanese in 1939 there was perfect co-operation between the Red Army and the Red Air Force. A terrific blizzard on the Karelian Isthmus from February 22 to 27 stopped the Soviet attack for the time being, but on the latter date it was resumed; by March 1, 1940, Viborg was surrounded on three sides and "by March 7, the Red left movements were extending, by attacks further down the coast, and reaching even Kotka, from which a railway runs north to join the main Helsinki-Viborg line. This threatened to cut off the southern Finnish army from its base, for the extreme left of the Red Army was now some 60 miles west of Viborg. To achieve this three landings had been made on the Finnish coast across the frozen sea of the Gulf of Finland, each force marching over 20 to 25 miles of ice."

Summing up this phase of the campaign Major Hooper stated:

"The Red force on the Isthmus consisted of 14 divisions of infantry, and some idea of the difficulty of rail communications and the necessity for smooth staff work can be

gained when it is noted that 30 trains alone are needed for the transportation of one division. The speed of the follow-up of the Red Army surprised the Finnish Command. Much doubt had been expressed outside the Soviet Union as to the capabilities of the Soviet railways to stand up to the strain of war and the movements of mighty armies. This myth was now destroyed. The Murmansk railway carried out the task for all forces of the thrusts north of Lake Ladoga. But more remarkable as a feat of good railway work, as well as good staff work was the supplying of the fighting divisions on the Mannerheim front during the rapid advance. The two railways for this area merged into one over the Neva bridge at Leningrad. At this bottleneck supply trains must have been passing at the rate of at least one an hour throughout the campaign."

And finally he rightly concluded: "General Meretskoy's plan, well conceived and boldly executed, was on a scale worthy of the past great masters of the art of war. In contrast to the days of Tsarism, he had the advantage of superior weapons, but for all that he could never have brought the campaign to its decisive conclusion had it not been for the fighting qualities of the rank and file of the Red Army. . . .

"In Finland, the Red Army, in a race against time, achieved what no other modern army has yet dared to attempt, that is, it attacked and broke a modern defensive system of fortifications by frontal assault. The campaign was won in what is perhaps the most difficult terrain in Europe, in a sub-arctic climate and during mid-winter, the severest winter experienced for 70 years. As a feat of arms it stands out in all history as unique. Only military ignorance or political prejudice would dare to deny it."

## CHAPTER IV

### The Mannerheim Line and Other Matters

IN a previous chapter the question of the Mannerheim Line has been dealt with—its construction and destruction. Here we shall treat of what the press told the public, or to be more precise, what the Finns told the correspondents and what the latter told the public, on that and related subjects.

Early in the campaign the British public was informed by the press that the Mannerheim Line was impregnable and some of the journalists who committed themselves to this conclusion were men whose opinions would be taken seriously and quoted throughout the world. For instance, the military correspondent of *The Times*, December 19, 1939, declared: "It is quite probable that the Red Army will never breach the Mannerheim Line in the Karelian Isthmus, against which troops have been hurled almost daily in monotonously unsuccessful frontal attacks."

Three weeks passed and the military correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post* referring to Helsinki opinion of the Mannerheim Line stated: "The Finns say this zone of defence cannot be taken by frontal assault, any more than the Maginot Line can be rushed by masses. The one danger is of a force coming by the north of Lake Ladoga and getting in the rear of the position."—(January 11, 1940.) And correspondents on the spot were of the same opinion. The *Daily Telegraph's* special correspondent declared: "I returned yesterday from the Mannerheim Line which I also visited before Christmas. As an old campaigner in Finland I can



state that it will be almost impossible for the Russians to break through the Mannerheim defences by a frontal attack."—(*Daily Telegraph*, January 20, 1940.)

Six days later the *Daily Telegraph's* own correspondent in Helsinki stated ; " The Mannerheim Line is thought in Finnish military circles to be capable of resisting Russian attacks almost indefinitely, provided that its flank cannot be turned from the north."—(January 26, 1940.)

On the following day the *Daily Mail's* Stockholm correspondent, referring to a rumoured forthcoming new attack on the Mannerheim Line, rated Russian prospects still lower.

" Russia's northern communications are unable to maintain a steady flow of men and material to the front. Therefore, if the new offensive fails, the Russian forces on the Isthmus, so far from being able to pursue further attacks, may well find themselves on the defensive in a weakened condition."

In fact, during the month of January, correspondents, observers, experts, etc., although they had begun to revise somewhat their first estimates of the Red Army, were apparently convinced that the Finns were safe at least till the Spring and that the Soviet prospects of winning the war were next to zero. For example, the *Sunday Times* special correspondent cabled from Helsinki :

" It is difficult to see how the Russians can hope to carry out further major operations before the Spring. Even on the Isthmus, where they are close to their supply bases, they have been deprived of shelter and food by the action of the Finns in burning all houses and barns and killing all livestock before they retreated.

" From all appearances the Russians will continue making local attacks on the Mannerheim Line for several

weeks, but it is doubtful whether they can concentrate sufficient forces this season or even this year to break through."—(January 7, 1940.)

The military correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post* was equally emphatic :

"The army of Finland has now got such a sound defensive line that it will not be possible for the Russian Army to obtain results before the Spring. The Red General Staff have been forced to the same conclusion, and unless the last throw at the waist-line of Finland proves successful or ends in a draw, the Reds are also likely to dig in all along the line."—(January 11, 1940.)

More dogmatic still was the diplomatic correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* who stated that the Kremlin realised that "the hope of defeating the Finns in battle had almost, if not completely, vanished."—(January 13, 1940.)

In the atmosphere then existing on the shores of the Baltic it was not perhaps surprising that many unfounded rumours gained credence. Thus, on January 22, 1940, *The Times'* Stockholm correspondent cabled :

"It was foreign volunteers who piloted the aeroplanes which bombed the Russian bases in Estonia and also at Kronstadt. Official circles are reticent over the results of these raids, but it is understood that at least the base at Baltiski was badly damaged. Estonia officially denies the bombing."—(January 23, 1940.)

That story was not invented in Stockholm because on the same day the *Daily Telegraph's* correspondent cabled from Helsinki :

"Air raids by the Finns on the Soviet fortress and naval base of Kronstadt, which is at the head of the Gulf of Finland only a short distance from Leningrad, have caused consternation among the Russian High Command.

"Panic prevailed in Leningrad administrative circles, it was stated, as the city is totally unprovided with air-raid shelters, and the anti-aircraft batteries are far from adequate.

"The sound of Finnish bombs bursting on Kronstadt must have been clearly heard in Leningrad. The population of Helsinki is greatly excited by the news of the raids.

"The Finnish Air Force also bombed Baltiski port in Estonia, which the Russians have been using as a base for planes raiding Southern Finland."

Estonian authorities promptly denied that any attacks had been made on Baltiski and 24 hours later the same *Times* correspondent lamely cabled:

"Although authoritative Finnish circles support the Estonian denial that the Soviet base at Baltiski has been bombed, Helsinki correspondents maintain that important raids actually have taken place against Russian air bases in Estonia, though they no longer mention Baltiski by name."—(January 24, 1940.)

We would only add that the Soviet Government in its turn denied that Kronstadt had been attacked, and it was never explained how it was possible to see from Helsinki that people were in a state of panic in Leningrad.

In the course of February, 1940, our mentors of the press still continued to assert that the Mannerheim Line would continue to withstand the assault despite the fact that it was now frankly acknowledged that the Soviet attacks were much more formidable. Thus *The Times'* correspondent at Stockholm stated: "Neutral visitors who have returned from the Summa front during the last few days feel as convinced as ever that the Finnish Isthmus positions are able to withstand the heaviest onslaughts."—(February 13, 1940.) And the same paper's correspondent in the Finnish capital cabled: "I have discussed with military men and Finnish officials here the present gigantic frontal attack

by the Red Army on the defences of the Karelian Isthmus. There is no doubt that the pressure is tremendous, but nowhere is any apprehension to be felt. All, especially those who have come from the front lines, are confident that the Finns will continue to hold the attackers back."—(February 13, 1940.)

The *Daily Telegraph's* correspondent in the same city had gathered the same information :

"All one can add is that, despite the losses of valuable man-power whose superb morale would persuade them to hold their positions to the last gun, the Finns do not believe that they cannot ride out this clear military crisis.

"Even if they were driven back, the Mannerheim Line is not a linear construction, but a defence in depth, based less on lateral communications than on camouflage, fields of fire and valuable observation points. While reserves remain it can be held."—(February 13, 1940.)

And the terms used by the Military correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post* rose to a crescendo. Referring to the defence of the Mannerheim Line, he wrote : "Karelia is the name of a new page on history. The general staffs of Europe agree that the defence of the Isthmus has grown in status to a major test that may even change the form of modern armies."

If the Soviets won? According to this expert "a victory for the Russians at Summa would change the map of Europe, as they and the Germans would go through to the North Sea coastline."

In Helsinki the correspondents were told that although the "Russian offensive was unabated," "the Red Army could not keep up their pressure" and that there was no cause for immediate uneasiness. For example, *The Times* representative stated : "The Finns admit that they have been anxious about the outcome of the Summa battle. But they now feel that they hold

new positions, which it would take the Russians another three months and another couple of divisions to capture."—(February 16, 1940.)

Mannerheim, two days later, in a proclamation to his troops, after admitting that the Red Army had made progress in the Karelian Isthmus, continued: "You may rest assured that the enemy will never succeed in breaking our lines if, in their depths, we defend these new positions, against which the enemy's forces will expend their blood."—(*Observer*, February 18, 1940.)

Apparently this reassuring exhortation was swallowed by the pressmen in the Baltic countries and in London because on the following day Mr. Forrest cabled: "The great battle of the Karelian Isthmus, in which the Red Army has exerted itself to the utmost in an attempt to shatter the Mannerheim Line, seems at last to be drawing to an inconclusive end. . . . Under the sheer weight of men and metal the shell of the Mannerheim Line has been broken, but the core still stands." And he added rather naïvely: "It will be a long while before the whole story of the battle of the Isthmus can be told. *No war correspondents were there to see it.*"—(*News Chronicle*, February 19, 1940.) (Our italics.)

The military correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* declared: "With roads and railways damaged by previous fighting, and with little shelter for the Russian troops to be found, it may be weeks rather than days before a well-organised Russian attack can again be delivered."—(February 19, 1940.)

For some days the Russian attack was seriously hindered by blizzards and snowstorms, but by the end of February a note of anxiety had crept into the correspondents' cables; however, they were still confident that the Mannerheim Line would hold. By February 26, 1940, the Finnish High Command let out two contradictory



stories. Mr. Wm. Forrest cabled from Helsinki: "The abandonment of Koivisto Island was expected after the Russians had gained a grip on the coast north of Koivisto Peninsula. I understand most of the guns of the batteries have been saved."—(*News Chronicle*, February 27, 1940.) And next day Mr. Forrest related his story without any qualifications.

At the same time the *Daily Herald's* correspondent, Mr. Ronald Matthews, cabled from Stockholm: "Koivisto, Finland's island fortress that has stood through four months of Soviet battering, is to-night in the hands of the Russians. That is the grave admission contained in Helsinki's latest war communique. . . . Before the Finnish defenders fled over the ice (Reuter says) they blew up their guns."—(February 27, 1940.)

However, the press representatives were convinced that even if the Red Army made still further progress in the Isthmus, the Mannerheim Line would still hold. Thus the Helsinki correspondent of *The Times* stated:

"It is pointed out here that if Viipuri be eventually abandoned by the Finns this in itself is no final calamity, for the invaders would not even then have made a breach through the Mannerheim defences, the main points of which in this district are believed to be based on the lake system on the west side of Viipuri. Indeed, it is pointed out that the defence works which have hitherto been held with so much valour were all, or practically all, constructed as recently as last summer as outposts to the main defences of this road into Finland."—(February 28, 1940.)

On the following day the correspondent added: "The second line of the Mannerheim fortified zone is described here as even stronger and better situated for defence than the corresponding part of the first line."

During the month of February, while the Red Army was pressing its attack on the Mannerheim Line many



unfounded reports appeared in our press which, however, were soon dropped. For instance, Mr. G. L. Steer, cabling from Stockholm, referred to Finnish reports "of the bombing of the Soviet naval base at Kronstadt, where the Russian fleet, immobilised by ice, presents a sitting target."—(*Daily Telegraph*, February 2, 1940.)

Moscow denied that the Fleet was at Kronstadt and why should the Finns worry about a fleet which would be locked in the ice for some months? Surely the important thing would be to bomb the railway leading from Leningrad to the Isthmus along which the Russian supplies were being carried. Next day the same paper carried a story from the Rome radio "that a partial revolt had broken out in the Red Army and that hundreds of arrests had been made in Leningrad and throughout the Ukraine." Strange to relate, none of the foreign correspondents in the Soviet Union seemed to have heard anything about this revolt, and by implication it was denied by subsequent reports from correspondents in Moscow.

Some writers would seem to have persuaded themselves that they could read the mind of the Soviet Government. For example, *The Times*, February 19, 1940, published a two-column article entitled "A Dispirited Nation," in which the author stated: "As the Soviet Union is presently conducting it, an early victory appears improbable. It would, and in the opinion of some people will, be ended by compromise, once the Red Army has something to show for its effort."

Ten days later the diplomatic correspondent of the same journal stated: "The Russians may have begun to admit to themselves that the total conquest of Finland is too big a job for them, and that if they could save face with some sort of a victorious engagement on part of

the front they would do well to call off the campaign.”—  
(*Times*, February 29, 1940.)

In the same article the writer contended that the Kremlin anticipated a bad harvest. He continued : “ The spring sowing will be rather a problem, with so many men and horses taken by the army, the tractor park becoming to some extent dilapidated, and so many demands made upon the Soviet for oil. It is believed that in some regions large areas of winter wheat have been destroyed by severe frosts that came before the ground was sufficiently blanketed with snow.”

Curiously enough, just a month earlier, the *News Chronicle* correspondent in Moscow cabled : “ Throughout the countryside the authorities are speeding up preparations for early spring sowing and ploughing. The unusually heavy snowfalls are believed to be a good omen for the 1940 crops.”—(*News Chronicle*, January 30, 1940.)

The only comment we wish to make on these two contradictory reports is that the 1940 harvest was one of the best in Russian history. However, there was no end to the absurdities which at this time were splashed in the press. The *Daily Herald* on March 1, 1940, carried a remarkable story, one which must have made British publishing firms marvel at the efficiency of the printing trade in Finland. The *Daily Herald* reporter stated that he had met on the previous day a gentleman connected with the British and Foreign Bible Society “ who had recently returned from Finland.” After explaining that his society had been printing copies of the Bible in Russia at Sordavala, a town on the northern shores of Lake Ladoga, this gentleman declared : “ Early in the Russian offensive the town was bombed and the society’s building set ablaze. But the Finns managed to save tons of the Bibles. One night they

decided to retaliate and bomb the Russian lines. They loaded their planes and set off—but instead of high-explosives they carried the Gospels. High over the enemy lines they opened fire, spraying the Russians with Bibles. Some of the Russian prisoners captured later had copies of these Bibles in their pockets. Those who did not possess them asked for supplies from the Finns. We had to print a special edition for them."

The dates on which these remarkable episodes occurred were not given. Let us consider the time factor in the sequence of events. Exactly thirteen weeks had elapsed between the date of the outbreak of the campaign and the interview in London. "Early in the Russian offensive," presumably in December, 1939, the buildings were "set ablaze." "One night," the Finns were struck by the brilliant idea of bombarding with Bibles, knowing of course that soldiers during a fiercely-fought campaign, many degrees below freezing point in long dark nights without natural or artificial lighting, have plenty of opportunities and time for reading big books. "Later," some prisoners were captured who asked for copies of the Bible. The Society was in a dilemma. Their premises had been burned; however, they quickly collected a number of compositors (nationality unknown) who had mastered the difficult Russian language. The next difficulty was to assemble sufficient type, and a very considerable quantity would be required to print a Bible. This problem was a big one but it was also speedily solved. Next the type was set up; the galleys were read over, corrected and sent back to the printer; then came the page proofs, they were also read over, corrected and sent back and then the printing of the book was begun. This was accomplished in record time and next the Bibles were sent to the binders. These craftsmen put their backs into it and the Bibles were ready for distribution among

the impatient Russian prisoners. Moreover, during all this time, the manufacturing plants, power-stations, etc., of Finland were being subjected to a constant and vigorous bombardment by the Soviet Air Fleet, but even this did not seriously delay publication.

Next the gentleman left for London, a journey which at that time would occupy about a week. Shortly afterwards he met the reporter and told him his remarkable story. And all this happened in thirteen weeks. Well! Well! We leave anyone who has had experience of printing and publishing to draw their own conclusions. In passing we would comment that it is very remarkable that the brilliant idea of bombarding the Germans with Bibles, instead of mere leaflets, never seems to have occurred to the British Ministry of Information.

By March 1, 1940, a marked note of anxiety had crept into the messages both of correspondents in the Baltic countries and commentators at home, but they wrote as though the conflict would still last a long time and they had apparently no idea of what the next twelve days would bring.

"Although a month has passed," cabled Mr. William Forrest from Helsinki, "since the Red Army struck the first blow at Summa, there is still no abatement in the fury of its attack"—(*News Chronicle*, March 1, 1940)—but, he continued "the positions to which the Finns have now retired are even better than those they abandoned last week."

Next day the *Daily Telegraph* stated: "Of the five Finnish lines of defence in the Karelian Isthmus, only the first has fallen," and on the same day the *Yorkshire Post* said that according to the reports of their military correspondent "Stalin is hesitant, fearing that it will take him another year to conquer the Finns."

The *Daily Express* three days later published a cable from their Stockholm correspondent, Mr. Geoffrey Cox, in which he stated that "the Finns are not in danger of immediate defeat." Equally the *Yorkshire Post* continued to assert that the Red Army was a very long way from victory. "Stalin's troops," it stated editorially, March 8, 1940, "have won important advantages during the last few weeks, but they are still a very long way from decisive victory in the field, and soon the thaws and snowfalls of spring should come to Finland's aid."

Again, on the following day, Virginia Cowles cabled from Helsinki: "The capture of Viipuri would be a victory for the Russians, but at the same time it would not be a catastrophe for the Finns. The lines behind Viipuri are strongly fortified, the country is heavily forested, and a drive along the coast to Helsinki would be a series of slow and bitterly contested battles for which the attackers would be forced to pay with a heavy sacrifice of life. With the capture of Viipuri the Russians would find themselves still a long way to go." —(*Sunday Times*, March 10, 1940.)

Yet two days after this was being read in Great Britain peace was signed in Moscow, signed because, as we shall see in another chapter, the "impregnable" Mannerheim Line had been smashed and the Finnish army was on the verge of collapse. However, the absurd reports of the military situation that appeared in the British press up to the very signature of peace, were paralleled by equally ridiculous stories as to the peace conditions which Moscow would be willing to accept.

*The Times* diplomatic correspondent, February 29, 1940, declared: "In all the circumstances it is probable that Stalin would like to get out of the Finnish war soon if it could be done without much loss of face," and the correspondent continued, if some face-saving



means could be devised, Stalin would "put over" to his people that "Russia could dispense with the lease of a naval base at Hango." Next day Mr. William Forrest cabled from Helsinki: "There are at last, however, signs that the Red Army leaders are beginning to be alarmed at the inroads which the stubborn resistance of the Finns have made on their reserves."—(*News Chronicle*, March 2, 1940.) Where the correspondent read the signs is not disclosed.

On March 7, 1940, Mr. Anthony Mann cabled from Stockholm: "In Finnish political circles it is felt that the Soviet claim to Hango as a Russian naval base must be resisted at all costs, since Hango is the 'key' to Finland."—(*Daily Telegraph*, March 8, 1940.) On the same day the *Daily Herald* stated it was rumoured that the Kremlin's peace terms were now "more drastic than those presented to the Finnish Government last autumn," and added "the chances of their being accepted by the Finnish Government, even as a basis of negotiations, therefore seem small."

But *The Times* beat these stories. On March 9, 1940, in a long cable from Stockholm headed "Russo-Finnish Peace Feeler"; "Soviet Fear of Allies' Intervention," its correspondent contended that according to reports from Helsinki, the Soviet Government by this date had been compelled to adopt a yielding mood. "Russia, it is argued, became more inclined to conclude a compromise peace when she realised that the alternative was to have a major theatre of war at her doorstep, or even inside her own frontiers."

On the same date the *Daily Telegraph* declared: "In Oslo and Helsinki it was emphasised that the Russian terms were wholly unacceptable to the Finns, and the suggestion was made that they would shortly call upon the Western Powers for further and more effective aid."



And its special correspondent at Helsinki cabled: "Few observers here believe that the present Finnish Government would consider a settlement which would put the Russians in control of the fortress of Hango, more than 200 miles from the present Russian frontier."—(*Daily Telegraph*, March 9, 1940.)

The readers of our Sunday press were equally assured that the Soviet Government would not insist on Hango. Thus, for example, the *Sunday Express* stated: "It was said, according to the British United Press, that Viborg is not among the demands made. It is also said that while demanding part of the Karelian Isthmus 'to guarantee the safety of Leningrad,' Russia does not insist on taking the whole of the Mannerheim Line and will even agree to take some other base in the Gulf of Finland if Hango is impossible."—(March 10, 1940.)

Next day the *Daily Herald* carried what it termed a "dramatic message" from its Stockholm correspondent, in which he stated that Moscow, fearful of Allied intervention "must be willing to accept far less than the harsh terms mentioned when the peace feeler was first revealed last week." And the *Daily Mail*, on March 12, 1940, the date on which peace was signed, which included the cession of Hango and much more to the U.S.S.R., published a cable from its Stockholm correspondent stating: "It is understood, for instance, that the Soviet has conditionally agreed to accept the neighbouring Isle of Uto as a Baltic base instead of the peninsula of Hango itself."

The *Daily Herald* of the same day was equally emphatic that the Kremlin had toned down its demands. "Russia is understood to have considerably modified her demands. It is stated that she has waived her claim for the surrender of Viborg and the Arctic port of Petsamo, has reduced her demands concerning

Hango, and has agreed to leave certain parts of the Mannerheim Line in Finnish hands." We return to this subject in a later chapter.

As already mentioned, the truth about a campaign never comes out until long after it is over. In the case of this campaign, however, the truth, or at least some of it, was soon revealed. Mr. William Forrest, the *News Chronicle* correspondent wrote: "Physical exhaustion . . . that was the Damocles sword that hung over the little Finnish army. It was apparent already in mid-January when I went to the Isthmus front for the first time."—(March 27, 1940.)

This estimate was endorsed by the *Evening Standard's* correspondent, Mr. John Langdon-Davies, who declared: "By the middle of January it was already clear that the Russian effort was so determined, and so immense, that it was only a question of time when the Finnish Army would be exhausted."\*

Note the words, the middle of January. That was a very different estimate of the military situation from that which the British press was at that time "putting across" to its readers.

Moreover, it was not until some time after the signature of peace that the public was clearly and definitely told that observers had greatly underestimated the efficiency and might of the Soviet military machine. To quote Mr. Geoffrey Cox:

"In Moscow foreign military attachés had worked on the principle that as Soviet industrial efficiency was only 60 per cent. as high as the efficiency of the British or United States factories, Red Army transport efficiency would be only 60 per cent. of that of a big Western army. But it proved to be much better than this forecast."—(*Daily Express*, March 27, 1940.)

\* *Finland* (page 88); published by G. Routledge and Son Limited.

He continued: "The Red Army not only began a mass offensive on February 1, in which at one stage they were using 300,000 shells a day, but they kept it up for forty-six days until the war ended. The pauses the Finns had expected to come through transport difficulties never came."

In closing this chapter we would draw attention to one of the many important facts mentioned by Mr. George L. Steer in a series of articles in the *Daily Telegraph* after his return to London from Finland. He wrote: "Even when late in the war, French long-range guns arrived, they were outranged by the Russian 12-inch by nearly four miles."

There was no end to the absurdities, not to use a harder and more pertinent word, disseminated by the British press from the beginning to the end of the campaign. On December 8, 1939, the *Daily Mail* carried a long cable from its Helsinki correspondent, Mr. Ralph Hewins in which, among other things, he stated: "Russian troops advancing on the Karelian front are reported to have driven Polish refugees at bayonet-point across areas which they believe to have been mined. To combat this trick the Finns have withheld direct fire, using trench mortars instead." In justice to the *Daily Mail* it must be added that it was not the only paper which fell for this story.

After the campaign was over, Mr. John Langdon-Davies, the *Evening Standard* correspondent wrote: "The everlasting stories that have been rehashed for the Finnish war of the advancing Russians driving before them a cover of civilian men, women and children are, I am perfectly certain, fabrications, not of the Finns, who have shown themselves above the petty forms of propaganda, but of far-sighted journalists in Stockholm."\*

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\* *Finland* (page 37)

The only comment we wish to make on this rebuttal is that the *Daily Mail* published it as from Helsinki, not Stockholm, and of course it must have been passed by the Finnish censor.

What the Russians would do to the Finns if the former won exercised the imagination of Finnish propagandists. Mr. Carl Anderson, the *Daily Herald's* Copenhagen correspondent, cabled January 28, 1940, that information had reached that city from "sources in the Baltic countries which claim to be in close touch with Moscow," that "as soon as he [Stalin] wins the war—if he does—the entire population of Finland will be transported to the interior of Russia."—(January 29, 1940.)

As will be seen in the chapter dealing with the terms of the Peace Treaty, nothing of the kind happened.

As usual when "difficulties" in the Soviet Union are front page news, Stalin's health, according to the stunt writers, suffers. The *Daily Telegraph*, March 2, published a cable from Rome stating:

"Stalin has been seriously ill since the middle of last month suffering from aneuria, lack of nervous power, according to reports in Moscow quoted in a Stockholm despatch. A celebrated Vienna specialist, Dr. Ettinger, is reported to have arrived in Moscow secretly by 'plane to attend him."

On the very day that this appeared, the following cable was on the wires from Moscow:

"Stalin appeared to be very fit and laughed heartily when he watched a ballet performance at the Bolshoi Opera House in Moscow last night.

"He was accompanied by Marshal Voroshilov, Soviet Defence Commissar, M. Molotov, Foreign Commissar, and other Soviet leaders."—(*Sunday Times*, March 3, 1940.)

Skiers came very much into the picture during the hostilities. Could the Russians make good skiers? The Copenhagen correspondent of the *Daily Mail* cabled, January 31, 1940:

"Fierce fighting has broken out again in the Finnish 'waistline.' Here the Finns are engaging 20,000 Russians of the 54th Division. For the first time they are facing first-class units of skiers.

"These ski troops form a separate group of the Ogpu. They are dressed in white like the Finns. They are better trained and equipped than the ordinary Russian troops."

That was on January 31 and it is reasonable to suppose that they would improve between that date and the end of the campaign. However, after the finale, the *Evening Standard* correspondent, Mr. John Langdon-Davies, implied that the Russians were hopeless skiers as compared with their opponents. To quote his exact words: "No manual, no course in military tactics could teach the Russians what it had taken the Finns hundreds of years of practice to make perfect."—(March 29, 1940.)

Well! Well! We shall have to leave it to our readers.



## CHAPTER V

### The Red Army

AS mentioned in a previous chapter, in the early days of the Russian-Finnish campaign, the British press told the world that the equipment of the Red Army was out of date, that the men had no heart for the fight and that the leadership was hopeless. However, from early in January, 1940, when about one-third of the period of the campaign had passed, correspondents of all papers began cautiously to state that the Red Army was showing signs of very considerable improvement and towards the end of the campaign their reports were very different from those splashed across the front pages in December, 1939.

Mr. Ralph Hewins cabled from Helsinki, January 2, 1940: "Russia to-day launches attack after attack on the Mannerheim Line in a raging blizzard. She brought up a reorganised army of 200,000 men, younger, better-equipped and trained than those in action previously," and referring to the fighting on the Petsamo and Salla fronts, the correspondent continued: "The Russian gunnery is surprisingly accurate."—(*Daily Mail*, January 3, 1940.)

"Russian marksmanship," cabled the *Daily Telegraph's* correspondent from the Karelian Isthmus, "has also improved very considerably, perhaps because better gunners have been brought up."—(*Daily Telegraph*, January 6, 1940.)

Respecting the clothing of the Red Army, Mr. Geoffrey Cox cabled from Central Finland: "The Soviet material was again first class. Their clothes were also good. The prisoners I saw of this division were



better clothed than any of the hundreds I have seen in the last six weeks. They have warm, new padded uniforms, felt boots and overcoats, though many lacked the right gloves."—(*Daily Express*, January 12, 1940.)

This view was endorsed by Mr. Ralph Hewins who cabled: "The defeated 44th Division were the best-equipped Russian troops I have seen. They had thick woollen balaclava scarves beneath steel helmets, padded cotton uniforms like those worn by the Japanese in Manchuria, topcoats and leather topboots."—(*Daily Mail*, January 13, 1940.)

*The Times* special correspondent with the Finnish North-Eastern Army cabled, January 15, 1940: "Russian anti-aircraft shells were packed in felt-lined cases like scientific instruments."—(January 16, 1940.) Such care with anti-aircraft shells certainly does not bear the hall-mark of inefficiency.

"Military experts agree," cabled *The Times* Stockholm correspondent, referring to the fighting towards Kemijarvi, "that the quality of the Russian command is much higher than it was in the Suomussalmi sector. This is indicated by the timely retreat and the ability to protect communications to the rear."—(*Times*, January 25, 1940.)

These reports and others which had been coming through from Finland had apparently their effect on the Military Correspondent of *The Times*, because on January 26, 1940, he warned his readers: "The successes of the Finns must not delude us as to the serious peril in which they stand, or lead us to suppose that the Red Army is without value as a fighting force." Further he averred that "a large part of the Soviet failures have, in fact, been due to under-estimation of a task which is actually of very considerable difficulty."

From the beginning of February the correspondents began to write in still more appreciative terms about the Red Army. Mr. G. L. Steer cabled from Stockholm, February 2, 1940 :

"It is clear that in the last two months the Russians have learned many lessons. One can think of several offhand . . . .

"They have found that, if big columns are sent into Finland, it is necessary to follow them with efficient snowploughs to keep the roads open for the long Russian lorry supply trains, as well as to enable the troops to make a strategic retreat, which is blocked if the supply trains are bogged.

"It is evident that this lesson was learned at Salla, where the Russians maintained themselves in fixed positions despite the Finnish encirclement."—*Daily Telegraph*, February 3, 1940.)

But Mr. Steer at this date still under-estimated the Red Army because in the same cable he stated : "The Finns, therefore, should get a rest until the end of March. Then the Finnish thaw sets in and lasts, generally until the end of May. The thaw not only renders the countryside impassable to ski troops, but the Russian lorry columns will be utterly unmanageable on the Finnish roads."

The correspondent at that time apparently little expected a Finnish collapse early in March.

On the same date, Mr. Wm. Forrest cabled from the "Isthmus Front," "Russian troops who are being used in this big push are better than those who were first sent against the Mannerheim Line, and their equipment could hardly be finer."—(*News Chronicle*, February 3, 1940.)

The military correspondent of *The Times* was impressed. He stated : "The tactics of the latest

Russian assault against the centre of the Mannerheim Line certainly do not lack ingenuity."—(February 3, 1940.)

On the following day the *Sunday Times* went one better; it carried a report from the Finnish-Swedish frontier stating: "The Red Army's new bid to smash through the Mannerheim Line is being conducted with a scientific precision that is astonishing to the Finns. The waves of planes, the intensity of the artillery barrage, the swarms of tanks, and the regular advance of the infantry, betray a co-ordination which has been absent from previous Russian attacks."—(*Sunday Times*, February 4, 1940.)

On February 8, 1940, the unanimity of the correspondents was truly remarkable. The *Daily Telegraph* correspondent cabled from Helsinki:

"There can be no doubt that the Soviet forces in the Isthmus are now meeting with some success, though at a slow pace. Their advance of a mile and a-half across the no-man's land in front of the fortified Mannerheim position has brought them to within 20 miles of Viborg . . . .

"The new Russian troops are of better quality than those which met the Finns at the beginning of the war. They fight bravely and are better equipped."

Mr. Giles Romilly wired from Stockholm: "Finnish authorities, I learn, are alarmed by the new efficiency which marks the Russian warfare. They are surprised by the accuracy of the Russian fire."—(*Daily Express*, February 8, 1940.)

Also from the Swedish capital, Mr. W. F. Hartin averred:

"The Russians are now showing such improved strategy that military observers believe their attacks are being directed by German experts. ,

" They point out that the Red Army, trained in defensive warfare, at first showed conspicuous lack of initiative in offense.

" There has been an impressive change. In particular, their artillery preparation and support in the fighting round Summa show a wholly German thoroughness."—  
(*Daily Mail*, February 8, 1940.)

On the same date *The Times* correspondent at Helsinki cabled: " The temperature remains below zero Fahrenheit, and conditions of fighting are appalling on all fronts. February is indeed usually the coldest month of the year in Finland."

Not having been on the spot and not having at our disposal the plans of the Red Army High Command, we cannot say whether the Russians had really underestimated Finnish resistance and made the initial mistake of sending badly-equipped and badly-trained troops in the first instance or whether the correspondents had been led to think this at the outset by their Finnish friends in order to encourage the idea that with the despatch of foreign help the Finns could win an easy and early victory. We incline to the latter view. In another chapter we demonstrate indeed that the whole campaign, so far as one can judge from the published reports of its progress, was carried through by the Soviets in accordance with a single strikingly successful strategy.

In any case, by the middle of February, Soviet success was becoming so apparent that any further running down of the quality and equipment, of the Soviet troops would inevitably have detracted from the skill and prowess of the Finns—hence the change in tone. Moreover, the boosting of the Finnish Army and the belittling of the Red Army had been so overdone that there was the danger, from the Finnish point of view, that abroad their friends might begin to think that they

were not in need of much help—hence, too, the truth regarding the strength and skill of the Red Army began to find a place in the reports of the military correspondents.

As for the presence of German experts in the Soviet forces—not an atom of proof of this was ever advanced. But to return to our chronicle of the estimates of the worth of the Red Army. As late as February 14 and 15 claims were still made by some correspondents from Helsinki, Copenhagen and Stockholm of great Finnish successes, and of the expenditure of immense quantities of war materials as well as enormous casualties suffered by the Russians; at the same time some correspondents admitted considerable progress by the Soviet troops and spoke highly of the Red Army tactics. Thus Mr. G. L. Steer, in a report from Helsinki: "The Russians are reported to have shown considerable tactical skill in managing their tanks. They pressed this mechanised attack in their usual way after dusk and at dawn, and penetrated the front of the Mannerheim system."—(*Daily Telegraph*, February 14, 1940.)

The Moscow correspondent of the *News Chronicle*, February 15, drew attention to the Soviet communique of the capture of 79 forts, he pointed out that this demonstrated the courage of the attacking Soviet troops and declared that: "Well-equipped and well-supplied Siberian crack troops are in process of taking by assault a series of natural, artificially fortified Finnish positions and have already seriously dented the Mannerheim Line at several places, particularly before Viipuri."

As the days went by the reports spoke of small gains by the Russians and of successful resistance and even counter-attacks by the Finns and there were hopeful hints that Russian supplies of ammunition must soon run short.



A story was started and taken up with enthusiasm by a number of papers that the Russians were determined to attain victory in Finland by February 23, 1940—the day which is celebrated throughout the U.S.S.R. as Red Army Day. The *Daily Mail* (February 16) went so far as to say that “by this date the Soviet press have promised victory on the Mannerheim Line.” Needless to say there was no truth in this, just as there was none in the stories concocted that Stalin had warned Voroshilov that his day was over if he failed to present him with Finland by February 23.

In the meantime the Russians were advancing steadily, taking position after position on the Mannerheim Line. The reporters sent fantastic stories of Soviet losses and continued to affirm, as stated in a previous chapter, that the Mannerheim Line could not be taken however many dents might be made in it. From time to time there were also lurid stories purporting to give eye-witness accounts of the ignorance and poor type of the Russian soldiers, as for instance articles on February 18 and February 25 by Virginia Cowles the *Sunday Times* special correspondent with the Finnish Army.

The military correspondent of *The Times* (February 21), whilst stressing the alleged capture by the Finns in the fighting north-east of Lake Ladoga of much Russian military material, also paid a tribute to the fighting qualities of the Russian soldier and stated that “it has not been fighting spirit but leadership which has failed the Red Army”—such views had been expressed more than once also by the correspondents of other journals. “Leadership” being a less tangible concept which can often only be rightly estimated towards the end of a campaign could be more readily belittled, but the



fighting qualities could not be denied in view of the persistent quite evident facts.

In a vivid despatch from their special correspondent on the Isthmus, *The Times*, February 23, 1940, said :

"The only thing more persistent than the blizzard of hail and snow is the Russian artillery . . . .

"The guns which the Russians are now using have been brought up to supersede the earlier long-range batteries which used to shell Viipuri. Firing in batteries of three, they alternate between 10 and 20 shots a minute so cleverly that it is impossible to calculate with accuracy how many guns are engaged. Even in this intense cold their artillery has to be water-cooled after each shot."

And on February 26 the military correspondent of *The Times* expressed the view that "over confidence" was the main reason for the earlier "Russian defeats." In the same issue in the course of a leader bitterly anti-Soviet and in general giving a wholly erroneous estimate of Soviet plans and intentions, the paper declared :

"The Red Army command evidently decided that the Mannerheim Line must be stormed frontally, whatever the cost, because, tempting as it may be to outflank a fortress if possible, the state of the communications did not permit such a luxury in this case. The decision was probably sound. Since then the operations on the Karelian Isthmus have not been lacking in rough-and-ready competence, and the Russian soldier has once more proved his capacity to persist without flinching in face of terrible punishment.

"It must be acknowledged also that the Russians have lost no time in following up their successes on the western side of the Karelian Isthmus. Already they have launched powerful attacks against the new Finnish front, a not inconsiderable achievement if this is in fact some five miles in rear of the old line."

At the end of February and beginning of March correspondents still talked as though the end of hostilities were nowhere in sight, but unable to deny the successes claimed by Soviet headquarters they more and more conceded the efficiency of the Red Army. The Stockholm correspondent of *The Times* (March 1, 1940) explained that inferior Red troops had been sent into Finland at first because the Russians had been over-confident and thought that the Finns would be unable to put up any serious resistance, and added :

"The reason why the offensive started on February 1 succeeded where previous attempts had failed, and forced the Finns to abandon their first line in the western part of the Isthmus, was the efficiency of the Russian heavy artillery. However well built, the dug-outs and pillboxes of the Mannerheim Line were vulnerable to direct hits and the systematic fire of the Russian heavy guns made it possible for the Red Command to force a way for the attacking troops into the foremost Finnish positions."

The Finns were forced to retire to new positions where, continued the correspondent, "the Finns are reported to stand fast, but with unexpected rapidity the Russians have been able to move up parts of their heavy artillery and resume their attacks in force, supported as before by hosts of tanks and bombing aircraft."

On March 2 it was reported that the Red troops had entered the outskirts of Viborg (Viipuri). Even then, and indeed on March 3, the Helsinki correspondent of *The Times* talked of the possibility of Finland "gaining a final victory," but what is equally interesting as showing the complete lack of appreciation of the facts of the case in regard to the Red Forces, is the following naive statement by the military correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, March 4, 1940 :

"The Finnish Army is certainly not beaten, but during the past week it has had little chance of gaining the respite which withdrawal might have secured.

"The withdrawal was evidently carried out with skill and in good order, but the Russians have displayed an unexpected degree of competence in their staff work. One expected that they would not hesitate to spend lives ruthlessly in fresh attacks, *but that these attacks should be well co-ordinated and carried out without confusion and with considerable artillery support was certainly surprising.*" (Our italics.)

On subsequent days the reports from Finland published in the British press may be described as "the mixture as before," but on the whole the tone regarding the Soviet troops became definitely more favourable. The Helsinki special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* (March 6) stressed the great bravery and tenacity of the Finnish troops and perhaps to add point to this praise also said that the Russian divisions on the Isthmus had "fought with a courage which has rarely been equalled by Russian soldiers in this century." He discussed alleged changes in the directive personnel of the Red Army and added :

"However that may be, the Russian troops now on the Isthmus look entirely different and fight far better than those who were sent early in the war.

"They are the first Soviet troops which have shown real fighting qualities in an impressive way, and they finally have the benefit of some real generalship, wherever the Kremlin may have found that essential quality."

On March 8 and the following days many Helsinki correspondents still continued to speak of the possibility of a Finnish victory. The military correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post* who had previously belittled the capacity of the Red troops and Command discussed the Soviet plans of attack as though the war was likely to continue still for months. He admitted, however, that the Red Army were "triers in adventure and are showing a new spirit and a better conception of possi-

bilities." "This," he proceeded, "is reflected among the troops, who are now better led and have recently shown a courage in the Isthmus more like the stubborn Russian of old."—(March 8, 1940.)

He put down the earlier failure of the Russians to the failure of the tanks to which they had "pinned their faith."

On March 12, the day on which peace was signed the Russian terms having been accepted by the Finns, *The Times* published a report from their special correspondent in the area north-east of Ladoga, in which he related that a Finnish captain had told him that if the Spring, as was hoped, would come early, the Russian offensive would die a natural death. This captain had also paid a tribute to the Russian artillery and said that "in the first month of the war the Russian artillery on the Isthmus had shown no understanding of tactics and a poor shooting performance, but during the last three weeks a remarkable change had been noticed. The Red artillery fire was now very intensive and concentrated, and shells were seldom fired at random."

He spoke equally highly of the improvement in the Russian infantry and expressed the view that communications behind the Russian lines were quite good. Finally, on March 13, 1940, it was definitely announced that peace had been concluded and signed on March 12.

In general, the correspondents of *The Times* and other journals insisted, even after peace had been concluded, that the armies which the Soviets first sent into the field were inefficient, badly equipped and badly led, but they had nothing but praise for the Red troops and their commanders in the closing stages of the war. This was particularly the case after March 12. On March 14 *The Times* published a report from a special correspondent in Stockholm in which, although in

general the Finnish defeat was attributed to the superiority in numerical strength of the Russian forces, an admission was made that already towards the end of January the Summa sector of the Mannerheim Line had been broken by the fierce Russian bombardment. The report also admitted heavy Finnish losses at Summa and said that "whether by good luck or through their intelligence service, the Russians launched their strongest attack when the defence was weakest—on February 10—and caused heavy losses, especially among the volunteer officers." After this engagement, according to the writer, Finnish confidence was shaken for the first time. The report continued: "By this time new crack Russian divisions had reached the battlefield. The break through at Summa was well-timed and well-placed. The 100th, 103rd and 49th Divisions of the XV Red Army were engaged. The men had been carefully trained in guerilla fighting and had the advantage of good patrols and tanks. In the later stages of the offensive their cunning matched that of the Finns."

Similarly "Strategicus" in the *Spectator*, March 15, whilst also stressing the great numerical superiority of the Russian forces and the inferiority of the Finnish anti-aircraft defence and air force, nevertheless conceded that early in February the Russians had discovered the correct tactics and that attack on the whole of the Mannerheim Line between Taipale and the Gulf of Finland was a skilful assault and the "artillery preparation was accurate, the liaison between tanks, infantry and bombing planes was effectively maintained, and the attack was pushed home."

The following extracts from a very penetrating article by the Military Correspondent of the *Tribune* give a very accurate estimate of the Red Army:

"The *U.S. Army and Navy Journal* for December 30, 1939, estimates that 'the entire Russian invading forces



number only 200,000 men.' If this estimate is correct the Red Army was at the beginning of the war using some 75,000 men along the immense frontier north of Lake Ladoga, while pressing forward up to the Mannerheim Line, on the much shorter main front, with some 125,000 men . . . .

"Where there is only one railway line, operations have to go slowly, as they do when an invading army depends on a single navigable river for its supplies. The Russian effort north of Lake Ladoga could in this respect be compared with the British Army's invasion of Mesopotamia which took some two years to achieve its object."

Turning to the attack on the Mannerheim Line the correspondent stated :

"But in the main attack on the Mannerheim Line there are no indications of serious military weaknesses. The artillery preparation and support was clearly very heavy ; there was no relaxation of pressure ; the number of strong points and concrete artillery positions, etc., taken by the Russians was announced regularly, and that number increased, i.e., more of these positions were captured in the second week of the offensive than in the first. There are few large offensives against defended positions in the Great War of which that would be written."—(March 15, 1940.)

Very interesting, too, was the article of *The Times* Stockholm correspondent which that journal published March 18, 1940. Here it was pointed out that the Red Army had had as its first testing ground the hardest possible terrain in Europe and as its opponents "the best individual fighters in the world." The Soviet troops on the Eastern front of Finland, said the correspondent, were over-equipped and not well enough trained, but they put up a good fight and their tactics improved steadily and he added : "By the time the war had ended the Russians had achieved a remarkable fighting form. Moreover, they had experimented



intelligently themselves, introducing such new devices as armoured sleighs, three-storeyed dug-outs and dummy encampments to draw bombing aeroplanes to anti-aircraft guns."

He pointed out further that actually the decisive fighting had not taken place on the Eastern part of the front. As regards the Soviet armaments he declared: "Most of the armament was first-class stuff—anti-tank rifles, machine pistols, machine-guns, and a new type of revolver that does not jam. *The Russians, indeed, must have a remarkable inventiveness.*"

And as for Soviet strategy he remarked: "The actual strategy of entry was good. The Finns admit that the five points chosen were the most advantageous, and the battle of Suomussalmi was conceived and fought in a way which shows that the Red Army has engineers who are capable enough when they are allowed to get down to their job. *A whole new road was built from the frontier to Lake Kianta, a distance of 20 miles, in less than a month.*" (Our italics.)

A somewhat similar estimate of the Red Army was given by Mr. Walter Kerr in the *New York Herald-Tribune*, March 23, 1940. Mr. J. Aldridge, writing of the Red Air Force in the *Baltimore Sun*, March 26, 1940, gave it as his view that the effectiveness of the Russians in the air was due to a combination of the great reserves of the Russian air forces, the courage and skill of the pilots and the efficiency of the Soviet planes. Speaking of the planes used by the Soviets after the middle of December, 1940, Mr. Aldridge said that "they compared favourably with British bombers of similar manufacture and were used for the same task." He also spoke highly of the navigation and accuracy of the bombing in the "wild country" in which they operated. After remarking on the effectiveness of the

new types of Soviet machine and parachutes which came into use as the fighting proceeded, he declared :

“ The men who made the Red Air Force what it is are as important as the planes. Their ability to fly is unquestionable, and their training is of a high standard, particularly in the science of flight and the use of science in bombing and other tasks. Also all the men were cleverly trained both as fighting pilots and bombing pilots.

“ Also the observers and gunners had to be able to fly planes, so that every man in the air was a pilot.

“ The rank of all men in the Air Force is the same and interchangeable, although the real skipper of the plane was the man piloting it. There were extras in their training, such as continuous use of oxygen for high flying, and as a rule the bombers flew at an altitude of 12,000 ft. or more.”

Finally he also said that the men in the planes were well and suitably clothed. Contrary to some reports, no women pilots participated and the Russians did not use any of their latest fighters in Finland.

In the course of a long article in the *Sunday Express*, March 31, Mr. G. Cox, after remarking that the Red Army lost every battle except the last one, affirmed that the Finnish war really consisted of two wars, the one in the North where the Red Army failed because, having under-estimated the strength of the Finnish resistance, they sent “ ill-equipped, ill-experienced troops to fight in terribly difficult terrain.” Moreover, the “ staff work high up in the Red Army command was bad.” In regard to this estimate of the fighting in the North, we would once again refer our readers to Chapter III, which throws quite another light on the strategy pursued by the Red Army, and the significance of the fighting in that sector.

However, even as regards the Red Army in the North, Mr. G. Cox gave a very different estimate than that given by various correspondents earlier. He stressed that "these troops in the North might not have appeared so bad had the Finns not appeared so very good." The Russians, he said, were brave and the Finnish officers respected the doggedness of the Russian infantryman.

But for the Red Army, in what he terms the second war—the one in the South around the Mannerheim Line—Mr. G. Cox expressed high admiration. He considered their strategy good and he spoke highly of their equipment, artillery work and the skill with which they shattered and stormed the forts of the Mannerheim Line. Amongst other things he declared: "I found that the foreign military attachés in Helsinki and Finnish staff officers were definitely impressed with the Soviet Staff work in getting up supplies for the Summa offensive, and in keeping them up."

In summing up the worth of the Red Army he stated; "I believe that the Finnish war shows that the Red Army is an able force for what it is trained to do—fight a war of position, or of movement in open country where its tanks and guns count."

Finally, it may be remarked that Mr. Edward Ward (the B.B.C. News Observer) whose broadcasts throughout the hostilities were bitterly anti-Soviet, retailing all sorts of fantastic stories about alleged ineptitude of the Red Army, etc., in an article on the campaign in the *Radio Times*, April 5, 1940, in which he paid a high tribute to the Finns, also, albeit grudgingly, paid an equally high tribute to the Red Army, to quote his exact words: "The remarkable thing was how the Finns kept their communications going at all, particularly during the last month of the war when the Russian aerial bombardment became both so intense and so accurate."

## CHAPTER VI

### General Meretskov: 54th Division: Suomussalmi Sector

GENERAL MERETSKOV, Commander of the Leningrad Military District, who was the Soviet General in command of the campaign in Finland, would seem to have borne a charmed life. The *Daily Telegraph*, December 28, 1939, informed its readers: "The Finnish radio last night announced that Gen. Meretskov, who was in command of the campaign against Finland, was reported to have been arrested. It was also stated that he had been sentenced to death." Nevertheless, just a week later a "Reuter" representative cabled from Moscow that the General had been "elected to the Executive Committee of the Leningrad Soviet."—(*Manchester Guardian*, January 5, 1940.)

After his election the General continued at his military post, and on February 22, Mr. William Forrest cabled from Helsinki: "General Meretskov, who is directing the Red Army's drive on the Karelian Isthmus, marked the end of the third week of the big push with three new blows at the Mannerheim Line."—(*News Chronicle*, February 23, 1940.)

Strange to say on the same day the *Daily Herald* splashed a story headed "Inside Russia" by a neutral observer ("who has lived in Moscow for the past ten years"), in the course of which this perspicacious gentleman stated: "Informed circles in Moscow state that Meretskov and his entire staff were shot soon after General Stern arrived on the Finnish front from the

Far East. General Stern arrived ostensibly to assist Meretskoy."—(*Daily Herald*, February 23, 1940.)

Another version of this story was repeated two days later in the *Daily Mail* from their Stockholm correspondent :

"At the same time it is reported that General Meretskoy has disappeared from his command on the Karelian Isthmus. He was transferred there from the north-east of Lake Ladoga, after the defeat of the Russian 18th Division near Pitkaranta. No member of his staff knows what has happened to him, but there is little doubt that he has been executed."

However, that was not the end of the General, because on March 22, Reuter's correspondent cabled from Moscow :

"Decorations awarded to-day suggest that the Soviet campaign against Finland was conducted by a staff presided over by General Meretskoy."—(*News Chronicle*, March 23, 1940.)

The message continued :

"General Stern—reported to have been put in command of the Soviet forces in the later phases of the campaign—is not mentioned, which suggests that he never left the command of the Soviet forces in the Far East."

After that stage in his career, General Meretskoy appeared from time to time at public functions in Moscow and Leningrad looking none the worse for his somewhat unusual experiences. Subsequently he was appointed Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army and later Director of Military Training. For his valiant conduct of the Finnish campaign the Soviet Government also bestowed on him the highest Soviet honour—he was given the title of "Hero of the Soviet Union."

### *The 54th Division*

The Soviet 54th Division went through some very exciting and strange experiences. On February 1, *The Times* published a report from their special correspondent at Kuhmo (some 50 miles to the south of Suomussalmi) that on January 29 the Finnish troops had opened a surprise attack on the Soviet 54th Division at Kuhmo in the central sector of Finland.

The *Daily Herald* of the same date also reported from Copenhagen that the Finns were closing in on the 54th Division at Rasti, 25 miles from Suomussalmi, and that Finnish circles were confident that "in a day or two they will be able to announce the destruction of the 54th Division." On February 2 there were more detailed reports in the British press of the encircling movement of the Finns.

During the subsequent week, heavy fighting was reported at the Kuhmo front. The Russians were reported to have lost some 1,500 dead and to have failed to improve their position.

After another week had passed, *The Times* correspondent at the Kuhmo front, in a message dated February 14, stated that in the fight which began on this front a fortnight ago the Finns had hoped for a quick and decisive victory, but the 54th Division had not yet been defeated. The correspondent proceeded to allege, however, that the Finns had improved their position, that nearly 2,000 Red soldiers had been killed and many thousands were surrounded and could not get supplies. The ski-ing troops from Siberia, according to this report, had all been killed, but the Finns were not trying to force a decision—they hoped the snow would do the work for them, and he added:

"The Russians have no equipment for ploughing roads through the snow, and if their escape is cut off they must



die. The question at present seems to be not so much whether the Finns will be successful or not, but how many Russian troops will reach the frontier before catastrophe overtakes them."—(*The Times*, February 15, 1940.)

And the *Daily Express* of the same date declared that the 54th Division was in imminent danger of being wiped out.

Four days later the cables were much more definite. The Helsinki correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* reported :

"The Finns in Central Finland claimed a big victory. The Russian 54th Division, they stated, has been broken up with heavy losses. They have also severely punished another Russian Division, said to be the 33rd.

"The Russian losses are estimated at 6,000 dead and 20,000 wounded.

"The Siberian Ski Battalion was intercepted while trying to reach Kuhmo to relieve the 54th Division. The Russians suffered heavy losses, and the battalion was dispersed."—(February 19, 1940.)

*The Times* Helsinki correspondent sent a similar report and on February 20, the military correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post* declared quite definitely that "at Kuhmo the Finns have finally dispersed the Red 54th Division by the familiar method of isolation and starvation."

But the 54th Division seems to have been a restless corpse, for only two days later, on February 22, the *Daily Telegraph*, published a report from their Helsinki correspondent giving a vivid description of the fighting in the Kuhmo sector from which it was clear that the 54th Division, though according to him in a very tight corner, was still fighting! About a week later the same correspondent reported that "on the Kuhmo front, another strong point of the 54th Russian Division

has been captured. Three Russian guns were destroyed " (February 28, 1940), and the next day in the course of a report *The Times* Stockholm correspondent declared that "in the Kuhmo sector the Finns continue methodically to break up the Russian positions which they have long been encircling, and have destroyed a further number of machine-gun posts."

On March 2, the military correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post* giving a list of Finnish victories over the Russians, included the 54th Division among those "destroyed." However, still the 54th Division refused to lie quiet in the grave dug for it by the various war and military correspondents, for on March 14, 1940, we were informed by the Helsinki correspondent of the *Daily Express* that the trapped 54th Division which "had been defending itself . . . near Kuhmo" had been saved by the peace. This view was also taken by the Kuhmo front correspondent of *The Times* in a despatch to the latter, dated March 25. Finally, in the *Daily Telegraph*, March 25, Mr. G. Steer, writing from Helsinki in a message dated March 24, described the departure of the 54th Division from the Kuhmo area to the Soviet Union. The Finnish Colonel in command of operations in that area told Mr. Steer that "10,000 of the 18,000 who had entered Finland trooped back to Russia." The beleaguered Soviet soldiers seemed to Mr. Steer to have been efficiently fed from the air.

Thus it came about that the 54th Division lived to read its own obituary notices.

### *The Suomussalmi Sector*

As regards the fighting at and around Suomussalmi which figured very much in the news, there were curious contradictions in the reports. To give a few instances : On December 18, 1939, the *Daily Telegraph's* special correspondent at Rovaniemi stated that "two Russian

divisions totalling 36,000 men had been smashed." and that nearly all these men were either prisoners or casualties. The main Finnish successes were claimed to have been gained at Suomussalmi and the area immediately North of Lake Ladoga.

*The Times* Helsinki correspondent, in a message dated December 17, 1939, also said that on the Suomussalmi frontier the Soviet attack had suffered a severe defeat after having reached with difficulty Suomussalmi, about 20 miles from the frontier. On December 19, *The Times* published a report from their Stockholm correspondent which stated that General Wallenius had established that the number of Russians encircled in Suomussalmi was 17,000. A message from Helsinki dated December 19, in the *Financial News* (December 21) stated that the Finns had practically wiped out two Soviet divisions near Suomussalmi and nearly 20,000 Russians were said to have been killed.

It is interesting to note that whilst the Finns claimed to have retaken Suomussalmi, the Soviet communiqués continued to claim advances in the Suomussalmi region, and on December 25 the Soviet communiqué reported that severe fighting had again broken out in the Suomussalmi sector and that the Soviet forces had inflicted severe defeat on the Finns, occupying their fortified positions; the Finns on their side admitted that this sector was showing renewed activity.

Nevertheless, on December 27, *The Times* Stockholm correspondent said that the Finns were inclined to feel most satisfaction at the Russian retreat towards Uhtua following their "rout at Suomussalmi." However, on December 29, the *Manchester Guardian* stated that the Finns had pushed back the Russians a few miles to the east of Suomussalmi, but the Russians were now counter-attacking and on December 30, according to *The Times*, fighting was still proceeding in this area.

On December 31, 1939, the Finnish Northern Army claimed a victory in the Suomussalmi area in a battle which took place near Kianta. The Finnish war communiqué regarding this battle stated :

" The fighting at Suomussalmi (Central Finland) has now come to an end. The enemy divisions which have been operating there have been completely dispersed. Our troops have captured a great deal of material.

" The remainder of the divisions are wandering in the wilderness and are being pursued in the direction of Jungtusranta.

" The booty captured from the enemy comprises, among other things, 27 guns, 11 tanks, numerous other automatic weapons, 150 motor cars, and a transport of 150 horses. There are thousands of dead on the enemy side.

" On the Salla front enemy attacks have been repulsed. Twelve tanks have been destroyed."—(*Yorkshire Post*, January 1, 1940.)

The official communiqué thus wisely refrained from giving actual figures of the division—not so the press. The *Yorkshire Post* and also the *News Chronicle* (January 1, 1940), claimed that the " 163rd Division (of the Red Army) of 18,000 men had been virtually destroyed." The *Times* and the *Daily Express* contented themselves with giving the losses at 15,000.

On succeeding days the reports of the Soviet losses varied somewhat, but *The Times*, *Manchester Guardian* and other journals all alleged that the remnants of the defeated Red Army division were being pursued by the Finns through the forests across the Soviet frontier, and according to the *Daily Express*, January 6, the Finnish Legation in London reported that " Finnish troops have penetrated ten to fifteen miles into Russian territory in the direction of Repola, forty miles from the frontier."

And in a message dated January 7, the *Daily Telegraph* Helsinki correspondent stated that "after driving into the Suomussalmi region the Russians have now been driven back north and south of there almost to their own frontier."

Then on January 9, the British papers published reports of another "Crushing Blow to the Red Army" to quote a *Yorkshire Post* heading, by the destruction of the Red Army Division, the 44th, which, so it was said, had been intended as a relief force for the 163rd Division, but had been too late to relieve the latter. There followed all sorts of lurid details and descriptions of sensational journeys across the battlefield with thousands of dead Russians in the snow in all sorts of weird (and impossible) postures, etc., etc. Thus a B.U.P. message published in *The Times*, January 11, declared :

"The magnitude of the catastrophe which befell the Russian 44th Division—after the annihilation of the 163rd Division less than a fortnight before—became clear to me to-day when I travelled over the battlefield in the Suomussalmi and Raate districts."

Then followed a description of the horrors of the battlefield.

The *Daily Mail* took a hand on January 12, piling it on and adding another Red Army Division to those destroyed. In a message from their special correspondent, headed as being from Raate, it was roundly declared :

"In the battle, it has already been revealed that 15,000 Ukrainians, Caucasians, Tartars, Kirghiz, Afghans, Mongolians, Tadzhiks, East Karelians, and men from Archangel, who composed the 44th Russian Division, met their deaths.

"The remaining 1,000 are prisoners, and their entire equipment has been captured.

"At the Suomussalmi end of the road, the 164th Division, whom the 44th sought to relieve, were also destroyed, only 2,000 men escaping northward of Lake Kianta, in an attempt to join the 163rd Division, which had previously been annihilated.

"These three forces composed the 45th Russian Army Corps of 50,000 men . . . .

"Three thousand Russians lay frozen stiff. Some fell with arms outstretched as if appealing for mercy."

However, on January 13, the headquarters of the Leningrad Military Area issued a report of the second three weeks' fighting in which they characterised the story that fighting was taking place on Russian soil as "an utter lie and a childish, senseless and laughable lie at that." In the Suomussalmi area the Finnish troops were some 10 to 15 kilometres from the Soviet frontier. As for the allegation that the 44th Division had lost 14,000 men, the Soviet statement said:

"The allegation is due to the supernatural fantasy of its ill-starred authors. The 44th Division had in all no more than 10,000 men at the front, how could it lose 14,000 men? Actually the Soviet casualties there did not exceed 900 men and these casualties were due more to the cold which set in so suddenly rather than to the activities of the Finnish troops. At the same time the foreign agencies carefully omit to report the fact that the Finnish troops lost at least 2,000 killed and wounded in these battles. They also failed to record the fact that members of the Finnish Schutz Corps brutally killed their wounded in order not to leave 'tongues' in the hands of the Soviet troops."

Curiously enough the *Daily Mail*, January 15, was one of the very few British papers which gave any prominence to the Soviet version. The British press continued to fill columns with descriptions of the



terrible losses of the Soviet army at Suomussalmi. However, on January 18, *The Times* in a leader referred indirectly to the Soviet report, but endeavoured to belittle it by insisting that photographs disproved this report. It is a relief to record that the leader did have the grace to add "It is true that we cannot as yet completely focus this campaign, because all the serious reports come from one side, whereas the other simply hands out propaganda."

But all the same *The Times* and most other papers devoted columns to the sensational propaganda reports from Finland and adjacent countries, but could find little space to devote to the serious, restrained and mostly short, indeed laconic, Soviet reports.

The truth of the matter was that the fighting in this area swayed to and fro with varying successes now for one side now for the other and whilst Soviet victories were practically ignored by the reporters, every Finnish victory was boosted and magnified out of all proportion. Perhaps it would be fair to add that the sight of the snowy battlefield with its frozen corpses in the weird light of the Arctic winter must have made a very profound impression on those correspondents who saw it; it could not but stimulate their imagination and it is possible that they really thought they saw tens of thousands of bodies in all sorts of postures, where in reality there were only some hundreds lying stretched out on the ground.

It may also be added that when the war was over, it was generally admitted that at no point had the Finns ever crossed the Soviet frontier. When peace was concluded it was the Russians (as well as some Finns) who left Finnish soil—no Finn had to evacuate Russian soil because they had never occupied it.

## CHAPTER VII

### The Leningrad-Murmansk Railway

AS a glance at the map will show, there is only one railway running from Leningrad to Murmansk, and Soviet troops operating against Finland north of Leningrad, to say nothing of the civilian population, were dependent on this railway for supplies. It was estimated by some military experts that this railway in winter conditions could at most supply four modern divisions. These obvious facts stimulated the imagination of the "typewriter strategists" and stunt hunters early in the campaign. *The Times*, December 11, 1939, published a report from its Stockholm correspondent: "An unconfirmed report even states that the railway has been damaged in three places." Two days later the *Daily Telegraph's* correspondent cabled from Central Finland: "Finnish airmen have flown in bitter weather over the strategic railway line from Murmansk 70 miles north of Lake Ladoga and bombed the track. The rails were torn to scrap metal over a distance of 12 miles."

*The Times* correspondent again returned to the subject. He cabled: "Although the military authorities are very reticent, it appears that the Finns have inflicted some damage on the Murmansk railway by bombs and possibly by daring patrol raids."—(December 21, 1939.)

On December 28, 1939, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *News-Chronicle* from their Helsinki correspondent published the following statement:

"General Wallenius, commanding the Finnish Northern Army, told the British United Press Correspondent yesterday that Finnish troops are operating as much as

40 miles into Soviet territory, as far as Kandalaksha, the Russian base at the head of the White Sea.”—(*News-Chronicle*, December 28, 1939.)

(Kandalaksha is on the Leningrad-Murmansk Railway.)

The *Daily Mail* two days later reported from its Helsinki correspondent :

“ Other messages reaching Helsinki to-day state that the Leningrad-Murmansk Railway—lifeline of the Soviet forces in the north—has been cut by Finnish patrols.

“ If this is true it will greatly endanger supplies of food and material throughout the northern area.

“ Already serious disturbances are said to have occurred among the population of Murmansk, because of shortage of provisions following air attacks on the railway and the diversion of traffic to military use.”—(December 30, 1939.)

The readers of the Sunday press were treated to even more graphic details direct from Helsinki. Thus :

“ The ‘ Lawrence of the North,’ Finland’s General Tavela, is now on his way home with his ‘ suicide squad ’ of 250 picked ski runners after accomplishing the most spectacular feat of the war—the severing of the Leningrad-Murmansk Railway.

“ These men, armed only with pistols and 250 rounds of ammunition apiece, and carrying all their equipment on their backs, have in eight days penetrated 50 miles into Russian territory and cut the railway line at three points.

“ As a result, Russia’s Northern Army of 10,000 men, based on Murmansk itself will be deprived of food until the line is repaired—a difficult task in the present Arctic weather, with the temperature 50 degrees below freezing point.”—(*Sunday Times*, December 31, 1939.)

The correspondents in Copenhagen next got busy, Mr. Carl Anderson cabled from that city :

“ As a Soviet troop train was lumbering along the Murmansk railway on its way to the front, Finnish suicide patrols blew up a bridge immediately in its path.

"The train plunged to destruction in a ravine, killing nearly all the 1,000 men aboard.

"Soon afterwards, the Finns blew up a second bridge.

"This time a train laden with aircraft petrol crashed to its doom."—(*Daily Herald*, January 5, 1940.)

The correspondent added, and the *Daily Herald* published it in italics: "Owing to the arctic conditions it is doubtful whether the line can be restored before the spring."

This report was not based on mere Copenhagen rumours, because on the same day the *Daily Telegraph* carried the following from its "Special Correspondent" at Helsinki:

"Despatch carriers, returning from the commanders of the 'suicide patrol' on the northern front, stated that the work of destruction on the Russian railways had been carried out with far greater thoroughness than had at first been supposed.

"Damage to the track can be repaired with comparative ease, and it was necessary for the Finns to dynamite the iron bridges which carry the line over lakes and water-courses and to destroy power stations. This had been done at many points."

Three days later the *Daily Herald's* Copenhagen correspondent was able to add some more details:

"Murmansk, Russia's Arctic naval base and vital centre in her war against Finland, is faced with a serious food shortage.

"In fact, parts of the 45,000 square miles Kola peninsula, in which Murmansk is situated, are reported to be experiencing famine conditions.

"This is the result of the activities of Finnish ski patrols, which have cut the Murmansk railway which supplies the peninsula at several points. The patrols claim that it will take months to repair the damage they have done."—(January 8, 1940.)

The subject soon came up again. The Special Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* cabled from Helsinki, January 12, 1940 :

" Although Finnish military circles remain confident of their ability to deal with all Russian attacks, a certain anxiety is felt in some quarters here regarding the position on the Salla front, north of Finland's bottle-neck.

" Russian attacks at Salla and Petsamo are thought to foreshadow a determined effort to relieve the pressure on the central front, where the Finns entered Soviet territory after their victory east of Suomussalmi."—(January 13, 1940.)

This message meant, of course, that the Leningrad-Murmansk Railway had not been cut, or had been repaired with marvellous speed, otherwise troops and supplies could certainly not have been reaching Petsamo even if they had been able to reach Salla which is much further south. Strange to say, on the same day the *Daily Mail's* correspondent cabled from Raate (Finland) :

" Some Finnish patrols are penetrating 40 miles a day into Russian territory to cut communications. The Murmansk railway is frequently breached, cutting off supplies and reinforcements from the invaders at Kuusamo, Salla and Petsamo to the north."

In the same issue and on the same page of the *Daily Mail* a message from Helsinki stated :

" The Russians are understood to be making a desperate stand in the Salla region, north of the Finnish 'waist.' Reinforcements have arrived and two Red Divisions are believed to be engaged."

We venture to think that the *Daily Mail* readers had some little difficulty in reconciling the two cables.

To the credit of *The Times'* leader writer, be it recorded that he was not taken in by these fanciful



imaginings. He wrote (January 18, 1940): "Russia appears to have got a great deal out of her Murmansk railway." Next day a correspondent of the same paper cabled from Stockholm :

"Two Russian divisions, some 40,000 or 50,000 men, have been resisting there for some time, and the fighting has been most bitter. There are good roads and a new railway from the frontier to Kandalaksha, on the Murmansk line. The Russians will therefore be able to bring up supplies, and the Finns will have a hard task to sever the Russian communications."—(January 20, 1940.)

This report obviously implied that the Soviet troops in the North were not starving, that supplies and men were reaching Kandalaksha from Leningrad and that the railway was working.

No doubt the military correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* had been following events as closely as was possible through this maze of reports. He commented : "The Murmansk Railway seems not to have been seriously interrupted. In fact, *it must have been working with an efficiency which is surprising in view of the accepted accounts of the general condition of Russian railways.*"—(January 22, 1940.) (Our italics).

On the same day *The Times'* correspondent cabled from Stockholm :

"It is reported from the Petsamo front that the Russians have moved up reinforcements in the Finnish Corridor from the Arctic Sea. Both troops and aircraft were shipped from Murmansk."—(January 23, 1940.)

Here the implication is clear. Reinforcements could only reach Murmansk from Leningrad if the railway was functioning. Two days later the correspondent of the same journal cabled that "the enemy attacked . . . in the Petsamo region."—(January 26, 1940.)

After this the "suicide squads" and the Leningrad-Murmansk railway completely disappeared from the columns of our press. Whether the former had actually committed suicide or had ever existed outside the brain-boxes of the correspondents was never explained.

However, reports galore came from Helsinki, Stockholm, etc., implying that the railway was working well. For instance, it was stated that the Soviet forces were attacking from the Petsamo front, that they had compelled the Finns to retreat further south; that the Russians were speeding up work in the nickel mines, and as if to convince the most dubious that the railway had little difficulty in coping with the military tasks the *Daily Telegraph*, February 24, 1940, carried a report from Stockholm stating:

"Reports reaching here state that Germany is now importing large quantities of chemical fertilisers, timber and rare metals from Kola Peninsula in Arctic Russia by way of Murmansk."

So the railway was able to cope not only with the demands of the military and the civil population of this bleak northern region, but also to handle incoming commercial traffic.

The next news the British public received about the railway was that the Finns never tried to damage the tracks. Virginia Cowles cabling from Helsinki, March 2, 1940, describing the raids against the railway stated:

"They (the Finns) had travelled for seven days behind the Russian lines, sleeping under the pine trees at night and ski-ing on an average 30 miles a day. They had taken no blankets or extra clothes, for the weight they could carry was reserved for machine-pistols and hand grenades; and the only food they had was dried reindeer meat, bread and butter and plenty of sugar. When they reached the railway they made no attempt to blow up the tracks

because they can be so easily repaired ; they concentrated on burning down warehouses and refuelling stations along the way.”—(*Sunday Times*, March 3, 1940.)

By this time no one questioned that the railway was working well and on March 7, 1940, Mr. G. T. Garratt, the special correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* cabled from Helsinki : “ The two strategic needs of Finland are adequate reserves in the South and an attacking force in the North which can cut through to the Murmansk railway. For this double purpose the man-power of Finland must be totally insufficient, and the brilliant individual achievements of the Finnish patrols must not blind us to this.”—(*Manchester Guardian*, March 8, 1940.)

Finally, less than a month after the conclusion of peace, Mr. Eric Dancy, the *News Chronicle's* special correspondent, cabled from Stockholm :

“ News reaches here from Moscow to-day that Soviet engineers have already begun the construction of the railway which will link the Murmansk railway with the Swedish frontier. In commercial and political circles here wonderment is expressed at the promptness, in the worst season of the year, the Soviet is showing in extending the line.”—(*News Chronicle*, April 3, 1940.)

This was a very notable achievement and the assembly of the necessary material in the short three weeks after the conclusion of the war in winter conditions would have been quite impossible had the Soviets to carry out extensive repairs to the railway after the conclusion of peace. The plain fact was that the railway had never been cut and that it had worked with remarkable efficiency during the whole course of the fighting.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Foreign Volunteers and Military and Civilian Casualties

SOON after the outbreak of hostilities, minds harked back to the Spanish Civil War and the question of foreign volunteers to aid the Finns was much canvassed. It will be recalled that the British Government placed every obstacle in the path of volunteers wishing to fight on the side of the democratically elected Government of Spain; in the case of Finland they pursued an opposite policy.

In 1937, during the Spanish Civil War the Government was advised by the Law Officers of the Crown that the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1870 made it illegal for any British subject to take service in the forces of a foreign state engaged in warlike operations with a friendly state. However, in the case of Finland they invoked a dispensation clause in the Act and granted a general licence "to British subjects to enlist in the Finnish forces."—(*Hansard*, February 14, 1940, Col. 773.)

In view of the fact that the British Government ostensibly looked upon the Spanish war as a civil war for they resolutely refused to concede that Italy and Germany, who had instigated Franco and his rebels, were fighting against the Spanish people's Republic, it would appear to the lay mind at any rate that the Foreign Enlistment Act could hardly be justly applied to the fighting in Spain, whereas it applied quite clearly to the Soviet-Finnish war.

However, what concerns us here are the stories "splashed" about these volunteers. *The Times* correspondent cabled from Stockholm, December 21, 1939:

"The first large contingent of volunteers left Stockholm Central Station this morning amid cheers from the crowd on the platform, who sang the Swedish and Finnish national anthems."—(December 22, 1939.)

A month later the same correspondent cabled :

"Nearly a dozen nations are represented in a foreign legion which has been organised in Helsinki and is now ready to go to the front. Its present strength is about one battalion, but considerable reinforcements are expected soon. Britons, Australians, Frenchmen, Italians, Poles, Austrians, Hungarians, White Russians, Latvians and Swiss have enlisted. Yesterday 30 Estonians joined after crossing the Finnish Gulf in row-boats."—*Times*, January 23, 1940.

Some three weeks later the *Yorkshire Post* informed its readers :

"Latest reports from Finland indicate that about 8,000 volunteers from neutral countries are now helping the Finns. Several hundreds of Britons are said to have arrived in Finland, but Scandinavians formed the majority."—(February 12, 1940.)

And on the following day the *Daily Mail* stated :

"More than 2,000 London men and women have volunteered during the past week and their names are now recorded at Thorney House. Many have offered to pay their own expenses to Finland; but none has yet left this country."

The tide was swollen from France :

"It was revealed in Paris last night that many hundreds of the 10,000 Italian ex-soldiers in France who have volunteered for service in Finland are already in action in North Finland."—(*Daily Express*, February 20, 1940.)

Next day *The Times* published a cable from Paris :

"The first contingent of volunteers from Hungary for Finland, 1,000 men, said to be the advance guard of



10,000 already enrolled, has arrived in Paris. The men were equipped with ski suits and voluminous white capes. The volunteers will later proceed to London."

The military correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post* wrote, February 23, 1940: "The British volunteers for Finland are expected to form a division of 10,000 men, and two-thirds are already enrolled. The despatch of the men will begin early in March, and this will bring the promised aid up to four divisions, the Swedish, Garibaldian, Foreign Legion and British. Four was the number the Finnish commander asked for, and every effort is to be made to duplicate them."

It was announced in the press on March 1, 1940, that Major Kermit Roosevelt—a relative of the President of the U.S.A., and then a serving officer in the British Army—"spent yesterday afternoon in London making final arrangements before leaving for Finland to take command of the British unit of the International Brigade. In the afternoon he visited 10, Downing Street."—(*Daily Telegraph*, March 1, 1940.) And the *News Chronicle* on the same day declared: "The Finnish Aid Bureau is to launch a great drive in this country for funds to equip and maintain the British volunteer contingent."

From all the foregoing the newspaper reading public no doubt thought that the Swedish volunteers had been fighting in Finland from early in January, 1940, and that at least some hundreds of British volunteers had reached Finland before the end of the campaign. What was the reality? Mr. G. T. Garratt, writing in the *New Statesman*, March 30, 1940, stated apropos the Swedish volunteers that they "came into action for the first time a week before the end of the war," and as regards those from this country and France: "At the time of the peace negotiations there were not a dozen

French and English volunteers in Finland. I could find only three English volunteers. Two were domiciled in Finland and had Finnish wives. The third was advised by the Finnish authorities to return to England and see if he could not hurry up matters."

In the interests of strict accuracy we would add that it was later admitted by the British Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs that at the end of the conflict there were about 130 British volunteers stranded in Finland, but whether they had all reached Finland before the armistice was not stated; but even this figure was very small compared with that which the press reports would have led the public to believe. Respecting this question of British volunteers—it is one more example of the melodramatic way in which practically all the news concerning the Soviet-Finnish conflict had been treated.

With regard to the Soviet and Finnish military casualties during the course of the fighting the Finnish authorities continuously asserted that the Russian losses were many times, in fact, up to fifty times, higher than their own.

"Military Experts" would appear to have accepted, more or less, the Helsinki estimates. Thus *The Times* Stockholm correspondent cabled:

"A neutral military expert passing through Sweden on his way back from an official mission to Finland estimates the war losses up to the middle of January more conservatively than some of the figures that have been published. He believes that the Russians have suffered 100,000 casualties, half of whom have been killed or frozen to death, while the rest have been wounded or frostbitten. He puts the Finnish casualties at 6,000, 1,200 of whom are dead."—(January, 29, 1940.)

This, be it noted, claimed to be a conservative estimate. Next day the military correspondent of the

same journal, referring to Russian casualties, averred that the "Finnish estimate of 200,000 made a few days ago may well be not wide of the mark." It is true that the correspondent added that "it is never easy for one combatant to estimate the other's battle casualties."

We do not think it will be contested that until the end of the fighting the newspaper reader who took the Finnish estimates of Russian losses at their face value was persuaded that Russian losses exceeded Finnish by fifty to one.

A fortnight later the same journal, in a leading article stated: "Hitherto the Russian losses have been estimated, by sober military critics, at as much as fifty times those of the Finns."—(February 2, 1940.)

By a coincidence the *Daily Telegraph* of the same date published a lengthy despatch from its special correspondent in Finland dealing with the severe fighting then proceeding in the Summa area, in the course of which he wrote: "*As usual*, no estimate of Finnish losses was issued here." (Our italics.) And two weeks later the same correspondent reporting an air battle over Viborg stated "Finnish losses in this battle *were the first reported for some weeks.*" (Our italics.)

After the conclusion of hostilities, Mannerheim in his last order of the day, in rhetorical language, gave the Finnish and Russian killed as 15,000 and 200,000 respectively.\* Later the figure of Finnish casualties was amended: in a report to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Diet, they were given as 18,000 killed and 35,000 wounded. Even if we accept the figures

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\* "More than 15,000 of you who took the field will never again see your homes, and how many are there of those who have lost for ever the ability to work! But you also dealt hard blows, and if 200,000 of our enemies are now lying on snowdrifts, gazing with unseeing eyes at our starry sky, the fault is not yours."—(*Times*, March 14, 1940.)

given by the Finns, viz., their own killed 18,000 and Russian killed 200,000, that would be at the rate of (about) 11 to 1, not 50 to 1 as the Finnish Government glibly stated in the early days of the campaign.

However, the Soviet Government had a very different tale to tell. M. Molotov (Chairman of the Council of the People's Commissars and Commissar for Foreign Affairs) in a report to the Supreme Council, March 29, 1940, stated :

" The war in Finland has exacted heavy sacrifices both from us and from the Finns. According to the estimates of our General Staff, on our side the number killed and those who died of wounds was 48,745, or somewhat less than 49,000 men and the number wounded 158,863. Attempts are being made on the part of the Finns to minimise their losses, but their casualties were considerably bigger than ours. Our General Staff places the number of Finnish killed at not less than 60,000, without counting those who died of wounds, and the number of wounded not less than 250,000. Thus, considering that the strength of the Finnish Army was not less than 600,000 men\*, one must admit that the Finnish Army lost in killed and wounded over one-half of its total strength. Such are the facts."

But what of the correspondents and visitors to Finland who reported and talked of 50 to 1 in killed ! Did they

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\* Major Hooper, in his pamphlet on the campaign, says : " The Finnish forces were estimated at 600,000 maximum, and this was possible with a ' mobilisation potential ' of 15 per cent. of the population. The regular army was 30,000 men, highly trained in such a manner as to form cadres for expansion, and a Schutz Corps organised by Mannerheim in 1920 after the Civil War. This Corps had a strong resemblance to the Nazi S.A. Troops, and was 200,000 strong. The " Lotta Svaard " of about 80,000 women, an auxiliary to the Schutz Corps, was for the purpose of relieving men of military duties in the rear. The army was well equipped, its artillery, including the anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, being supplied by the famous Swedish firm, Bofors, who had established a branch in Finland. There were also two armament factories, two munition works, a powder factory and an aeroplane factory."

count the dead? The reply is provided by one of the correspondents, Mr. John Langdon-Davies. He wrote: "Although the writer has seen many Russian dead, and a certain number of Finnish coffins and obituary notices, he has certainly not counted dead Russians by the thousand, any more than anybody except the officials responsible for the disposal of their bodies." (*Finland*, p. 45.)

Personally, we have no hesitation in stating that "the excessive Russian casualties" was unadulterated Finnish propaganda which misled the world in this as in so many other matters during the course of the campaign.

Next we have to consider the Finnish civilian casualties. A device, as old as the history of war itself, for creating prejudice against a belligerent, namely to accuse it of attacking civilians, particularly women and children, was worked to the full during this campaign. It began with the outbreak of hostilities. The *Daily Express*, December 1, 1939, in a report from their Helsinki correspondent stated: "In to-day's air raids, Russian bombs are believed to have killed 200 people. The Soviet pilots may have intended their bombs for 'military targets'; if so, they went wide." This report referred to Helsinki alone.

Two days later the *Sunday Times* in a cable from its special correspondent stated: "Scores of women and children, unable to continue their struggle towards safety, sat at the roadside, weeping with despair and exhaustion. I saw Russian planes diving on a village common and machine-gunning women and children huddled together on the ground for a few minutes rest. Never shall I forget the picture."

These "casualties" added to those of Helsinki would, one would have thought, sent up the figures considerably, yet on the following day the *Daily Herald* reported:

"Casualties throughout the country due to the air raids are given as 85 killed and 181 injured."

After this, for a time, figures of casualties were shunned. Rather, we were led to believe that the Red Air Force was trying, but singularly failing, to kill civilians.

Describing an air raid on Oulu, the *Daily Mail* correspondent in that town cabled :

"Crouched in the opening of an air raid shelter to-day, I watched wave after wave of Russian bombers try to wipe out this key town on the Finnish coast.

"Bombs weighing 500lb. crashed among the little wooden houses in which most of the population live.

"Hundreds of incendiary bombs followed. They fell in a shower among the wrecked buildings. Soon there were a dozen fires.

"People who had taken refuge in the danger zones were forced to run to new shelter.

"At once the Russian raiders swooped low. The streets were sprayed with machine-gun bullets.

"The terror lasted all day."—(January 22, 1940.)

One would have imagined from this graphic description that there were heavy casualties, but the correspondent added "so far, thanks to air-raid shelters and evacuation, casualties have been slight."

On the same day *The Times* published the following report from its Helsinki correspondent :

"During the very intense air raids directed against the civil population of Finland yesterday several hundred Soviet aeroplanes dropped about 3,000 bombs in various districts, including Tampere, Turku, Pori, Raumo, Lahti and Kuovola. There were also many machine-gun attacks from the air, but, thanks to efficient organisation of civilian defence, as far as is known only three civilians were killed and 35 wounded."



In the *News Chronicle* version of this story it was stated that "more than 100 buildings were wrecked."

The special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* cabled from Helsinki, January 22, 1940 :

"Yesterday's raid on Uleaa borg was the first which the Soviet fliers have undertaken in darkness. They fired a number of star shells to assist them in locating their targets and mercilessly opened fire with their machine guns on some small Finnish boys who were fishing through the ice."—(January 23, 1940.)

This message was sent from Helsinki and Uleaa borg is on the Gulf of Bothnia, therefore the correspondent could not have been a witness of the episode—we are not informed if the journalist asked the Finns whether it was usual for small boys to go fishing on an Arctic winter night. At this date the thermometer was recording 72 degrees of frost ! What hardy hot-blooded boys.

On the same date the *News Chronicle* published in the course of a cable from Helsinki :

"Excluding the war zones, the Russians dropped during the week 6,667 bombs, among them much heavier ones than had previously been used. This total was thrice that of the preceding weeks, yet the casualties were only 18 *dead and 109 wounded*."—(January 23, 1940.) (Our italics.)

The Finns were certainly very expert in counting the exact number of the bombs, but did they expect anyone to believe that nearly 7,000 bombs thrown on civilians resulted in only 18 deaths ?

The press next reported bigger and heavier raids. On January 30, 1940, all the London press carried reports, of which the following are typical :

"One hundred people were killed in Russian air raids on Southern Finland yesterday while the Finnish Army

was holding up the Russian steam-roller on land. Two ports received their worst bombings of the war. They were Hango, 50 dead, 200 wounded ; Turku, 40 killed, 50 injured."—(*News Chronicle*, January 30, 1940.)

"The raid on Turku was described as one of the worst which that town has suffered. About 50 Russian aeroplanes caught the town unawares, sweeping down on it in silence with their engines cut out. They made no attempt to attack the harbour, and all the bombs fell on the centre of the town. Several of the houses were still burning late last night."—(*Times*, January 30, 1940.)

Six days later, a cabled story, of which the following is a fair example, was splashed in our press :

"Messages reaching Helsinki last night from all over Finland told how town after town was systematically attacked by Russian bombers on Saturday. The death roll of 100 was the highest for a single day.

"Two hundred people were wounded, 50 of them seriously. The Russian planes flew in mass formation, squadron after squadron following each other.

"Most of the towns attacked were taken by surprise. *Civilians had no time to get to shelters or the open fields.*

"Parts of south-west Finland were heavily attacked. More than 30 people were killed at Kuopio, where seven raid shelters were struck and at least ten buildings damaged."—(*Daily Express*, February 5, 1940.) (*Our italics.*)

Two days later the same paper printed the following from Tampere, in Finland :

"There are two spirals of smoke rising from this, Finland's most important industrial town. One is the grey smoke of factories where men and women work side by side, keeping industry's heart beating ; the other is black smoke rising from the smouldering remains of their homes.

"For 1,024 bombs have dropped on this town. The last raid was a few days ago. It was like an aluminium

roof over the housetops as 32 bombers sprayed more than 600 bombs on the wooden houses below.”—(February 7, 1940.)

And on the following day *The Times* stated: “Every town in Finland has now been bombed by Russian airmen, according to information reaching Finnish circles in London. During last week Russian aircraft bombed 141 different districts and six hospitals. Nearly 7,000 incendiary and explosive bombs were dropped.”

Greater details appeared in other papers. A correspondent cabled from Hango:

“Every day for 30 days this town in south-west Finland has been bombed. To-day was no exception.

“Hango has had the severest bombing of any town in Finland.

“Since the war began there have been only seven days clear of alarms; 1,271 bombs have been dropped and 58 houses burned.”—(*Daily Express*, February 10, 1940.)

On the same day *The Times* published a number of pictures under the heading “The Bombing of Rovaniemi.” The following were among the captions:

“At least 150 bombs were dropped on the town in one day by three squadrons each of nine Russian bombers.”

“Little remains of the wooden houses in this part of Finland when a bomb explodes near, as may be seen. It is stated that every town in Finland has now been bombed.”

“Many hospitals in Finland have been hit by Russian airmen in spite of their plain marking with the Red Cross.”

There was a short lull, and then the *Daily Express* under a splashed heading “Red Bombs Fire Town of Evacuees,” published a report from Borga (Southern Finland):

“The greatest incendiary raid of the Finnish war to-day turned Borga into a mass bonfire; 28 buildings are blazing and hundreds of people are homeless.

"It was three o'clock that the first alarm was given. Nine Russian bombers flew over . . . .

"The centre of the town is now eaten out with fire. The main street is an avenue of flame and crackling buildings. The Grand Hotel, a stone building, has only one wall standing, and the inside of the Royal Cinema is a bed of glowing ashes."—(February 14, 1940.)

The same journal five days later published a map showing eight Finnish towns marked with X, bearing the following caption: "Towns marked with X were bombed in mass air raids by the Russians. Civilians were machine-gunned. A hospital was hit. In one town forty people were killed."—(February 19, 1940.)

On the same day *The Times*, referring to these raids, published a cable from Helsinki:

"Yesterday and to-day Helsinki has had six air raid alarms, but no bombs have been dropped near the centre of the town. In other less fortunate places 40 civilians were killed and much material damage was done. The chief raids during the week-end were in south and south-west Finland, including the already badly bombed industrial town of Tampere—known as the Manchester of Finland—Pori, Iisalmi, Oiihimaki and Kuovola. The largest number of killed was at Iisalmi."

And on the following day the *News Chronicle* published a story from its correspondent in Helsinki:

"There is no slackening of the Russian pressure from the air.

"Night and day, both in the war zone and the rearguard, the bombing and machine-gunning continue, and the centres raided in one day are almost too numerous to list.

"The air armada which was over Finland yesterday is believed to have been bigger than ever before—and the previous record was 500."—(February 20, 1940.)

The Russian attacks *a la* the press were well maintained: "To-day the Russians surpassed their previous aerial assaults by sending over 500 bombers. Almost every Finnish town was raided."—(*Daily Mail*, February 21, 1940.)

*The Times*, February 24, carried a report from its correspondent at Rovaniemi:

"Never before in this war has the Red air armada attempted to terrorise the civil population on such a scale as now. During the last two days I travelled from the north of Lake Ladoga to Salla, and bombs were being scattered as freely as if they were potatoes. It has taken me 62 hours to go 200 miles by train. At one unprotected railway junction we had 13 bombardments in 24 hours. Altogether more than 1,000 enemy aeroplanes flew over Finland at the same time."

Three days later Hilde Marchant wrote:

"The Russians are making a big effort to terrify the civilian population. Their bombing tactics in the last few weeks have changed considerably. At first it was the ports, industrial centres, railheads that were attacked. Now it is the small seaside towns filled with evacuees and refugees that they are bombing—little Bognors full of retired and old people and retired young ones."—(*Daily Express*, February 27, 1940.)

A British United Press cable from Helsinki stated:

"Fifty killed, 200 wounded in Soviet air raid on town in South Central Finland yesterday.

"Two waves of 14 and 18 Russian planes dropped bombs round military hospital, scoring five direct hits; 15 patients killed. Direct hit also scored on air raid shelter, killing 24 women and children.

"Bombing was seen by group of foreign newspaper correspondents, who watched Soviet planes make power dives at terrific speed to release bombs,

"Hospitals in two other towns were also bombed yesterday."—(*Daily Herald*, March 6, 1940.)

The special correspondent of the *Sunday Times* cabled "Almost every day the air raid warnings ring and people are forced to the shelters everywhere from a half to two hours ; sometimes we have had as many as seven alarms in a single day."—(March 10, 1940.)

On the morning of March 12, 1940, the day on which the Peace Treaty was signed, a Reuter's stop press cable stated : "Russian planes bombed many towns behind front yesterday."

Later on the same day, when it was known that peace had been signed, the *Daily Herald's* correspondent cabled from Stockholm :

"Attacks on the civil population have been working steadily up for the last month. Yesterday they reached a new peak point. Hundreds of Russian planes took the air all over Central Eastern Finland.

"They concentrated their attacks on back-area centres of population. Half a dozen small towns were practically razed to the ground. Passenger trains were machine-gunned."

Undoubtedly readers of our press—or at least those who accepted these reports at their face value—were driven to the conclusion that during the thirteen weeks of hostilities thousands, even tens of thousands, of Finnish civilians were killed. Yet what was the sober fact? The Finnish Government a month after the conclusion of hostilities officially announced that during the entire course of the war, 646 civilians were killed. In other words, during thirteen weeks of conflict in which, according to the press reports, every town in Finland was on many occasions bombed, far fewer civilians were killed than often during a single German night raid on



London. Why was this? Was it because the Russian bombs were duds? According to the cables from Finland the Russian bombs were capable of inflicting terrific destruction. To quote just two witnesses. *The Times* correspondent cabled from Stockholm:

"A foreign observer who returned to Helsinki to-day after a motor-car journey repeatedly interrupted by air attacks, described Viipuri as a city of ruins after recent incessant air bombing and shelling from Russian aircraft and guns.

"The streets are full of bomb-craters, smoke curls rise from burnt-out houses, and the churches are razed to the ground. The damage is particularly great in the centre of the city and its southern suburbs. The station of Liitmatter is also shot to pieces. This eye-witness, who has had experience of the civil war in Spain, says that he never saw anything like this down there."—(February 27, 1940.)

On the condition of the same city *The Times* some days later stated:

"When the Russians enter Viipuri they will find only a heap of smoking ruins, states a Reuter message from Stockholm. What only a month ago was still a fine city of modern buildings, even after heavy Soviet air raids and artillery bombardments, has been reduced to a shambles."—(March 4, 1940.)

If these descriptions are correct, the Soviet bombings must have wrought terrific damage. Yet the civilian casualties were low! Why? It has been urged that the Finns quickly took cover. We do not dispute the claim, but it would not by any means be sufficient to account for the lowness of the figure. Besides, were we not informed by many correspondents that whole small towns and villages were wiped out and that people in the streets unable for one reason or another to take shelter were deliberately machine-gunned time and again?

The inescapable fact is that there was no deliberate bombing of civilians. When hostilities had ceased, the truth came out. To quote an American journalist observer: "In so far as the war in the air is concerned, it is true that the Red Air Force never tried to exterminate the civilian population of Finland."—(*New York Herald Tribune*, March 23, 1940.)

It is, of course, very regrettable that any civilians were killed. But can this be avoided in modern warfare, even when the airmen—as in the case of the Soviet Union—most scrupulously reserve their bombs for legitimate military objectives?

That well-known military expert Capt. B. H. Liddell Hart says "No." He wrote: "The bombing of military objectives in the interior of a country cannot in practice, as distinct from theory, be restricted to its proper objectives. The factor of inaccuracy thus has a close bearing on the question of inhumanity."—(*Sunday Express*, February 11, 1940.)

After bombings of Berlin by British airmen, photographs have appeared in the London press showing apartment houses gutted; is it not a fair assumption that there were civilian casualties in these buildings? But the British Government would emphatically deny, and rightly, that their airmen deliberately attacked the civilian population of Germany. The charges hurled against the Soviet Government of deliberately bombing civilians in Finland is only another item of melodramatic anti-Soviet propaganda.

## CHAPTER IX

### Alleged Imperialist Aims

**D**URING the Soviet-Finnish hostilities, it would seem that the press just could not or would not believe that the Soviet Government meant what they said when they declared that their one desire in Finland was to safeguard their strategic position in the Gulf of Finland and the Baltic, the security of Leningrad and to prevent the use of Finland by other Powers, with or without her consent, as a jumping-off ground for an attack upon the U.S.S.R.

No, this was much too simple an explanation of her dealings with Finland—the U.S.S.R. must have some ulterior aims !

*The Times* Helsinki correspondent, in a despatch published on February 7, 1940, discussed the air attacks on Finland and came to the conclusion that "the attack on Finland had been planned and prepared before the formulation of the Estonian-Russian Treaty as part of a general scheme of imperialist expansion towards the West, aimed ultimately at the northern parts of Sweden and Norway, with a series of ' mutual assistance pacts ' used as stepping stones in the process of penetration."

On the same day the Copenhagen correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* in a despatch dated February 6, came to the conclusion that the U.S.S.R. and Germany were " doing a deal behind the scenes for the future disposal of the carcass of a free and democratic Finland."

And it was no doubt this idea which was behind the following statement by the Diplomatic Correspondent

of the *Manchester Guardian* : " The Allies are moving towards intervention in the Finnish war, for they have come to recognise that a Russian conquest of Finland would be equivalent to a German major victory in the war against the Allies."—(February 9, 1940.)

In the *Spectator* (February 9), " Strategicus," gave full vent to his imagination :

" Stalin has gone too far to draw back now ; and there cannot be any doubt that his vision looks beyond the lovely land of Finland to a Norwegian port on the Atlantic. What a prize Narvik would be ! It is on the Atlantic end of the Boden-Gellivare railway, which drains the whole of northern Sweden. Ancient ambitions have revived in Russia since the war has lighted the beacon of opportunity ; and it will not be long before her long-suffering troops are again urged westward across Finland towards the frontiers of Sweden and Norway. If they should succeed and realise at last the dream of generations of Russian visionaries, the situation in Europe, the entire war outlook will be revolutionised."

From this came the easy deduction that " Finland is defending Narvik at this moment." And the imagination having been stirred, new visions arose. Having succeeded in Finland, " Strategicus " felt sure " Stalin would turn his eyes in other directions—the south-east of Europe and the Mediterranean to wit which have always been the loadstone of Russia."

Mr. Garvin also found in this subject an opportunity for one of his customary sonorous and ponderous passages, thus :

" If Finland fell, the real independence of all Scandinavia would fall. The Soviet empire could reach out afterwards across the Norwegian coasts to the Varangerfjord to Hammerfest—even to Narvik in the open Atlantic. What would that mean ?

"Sweden with its neighbouring and incomparable iron-fields would have to become a client State under a new Nazi-Soviet pact."—(*Observer*, February 11, 1940.)

The diplomatic correspondent of the *Sunday Despatch* (February 11), sincerely gave it as his considered view that the U.S.S.R. would not stop at the Norwegian Finnish frontier but was definitely planning to obtain an Atlantic port in Norway.

The idea that once Finland was "conquered," the rest of Scandinavia would be at the mercy of the Soviets was a kind of *liet motif* throughout many a leader and other press articles at that time. Why this insistence on Soviet ulterior motives? Was it merely the result of their inability to imagine any big Power being satisfied with less if they had the opportunity of getting more? No, this certainly predisposed the writers and statesmen to adopt such an attitude, but there was, undoubtedly, also the hope that by insistence on Soviet ambitions for Swedish and Norwegian territory, Sweden and Norway might be induced to throw in their lot with Finland, or at least to throw open their countries to Allied troops, thus furnishing an opening for a large-scale attack on the U.S.S.R. True, there were those who warned that this might lead to a defensive alliance between Germany and the Soviet Union against the rest, but many in Britain and France were prepared to risk that, others undoubtedly hoped that once a war had started good and strong against the U.S.S.R., the main force of the general war would be directed against her.

Mr. Hore-Belisha, ex-Secretary of State for War, put the position quite plainly. After maintaining that Germany hoped to obtain an easy road to Sweden's ore via a Russian conquered Finland, he argued :

"What if the tables could be turned and the invader be himself invaded ?

"Leningrad, the former capital of Russia, is within 50 miles of the Mannerheim Line. The reverses of the Russian armies in Finland and the troubled spirit of the soldiers, who are driven on to fight, give cause for believing that the Soviet morale is not unshakable.

"A blow struck at Leningrad might well leave Germany with a Soviet corpse in her hands.

"If we neglect this moment of opportunity, and if Finnish independence be extinguished, the light of our cause will be dimmed. How much harder will be the task of the Allies!"—(*News of the World*, February 18, 1940.)

And in the course of a speech at Devonport. February 23, he stressed the view that the U.S.S.R. would not be satisfied with Finland, that the U.S.S.R. and Germany were aiming at the control of Norway, Sweden and Finland and he exclaimed: "The risk of helping Finland may be great, but the risk of not helping her may be greater. . . ."

Many also certainly hoped, though they did not state it in so many words, that Germany would eventually be won over to join the rest against the common enemy—the Bolsheviks. Others again, without looking so far ahead, declared quite frankly that it was in the interest of Britain that the U.S.S.R. should be expending armaments, oil, etc., in Finland, as she would then have less for export to Germany. They therefore argued that Britain and France should send all the help they possibly could in order to stimulate Finnish resistance and, in effect, prolong the struggle.

Thus, in the course of a leader, *The Times*, March 5, 1940, declared: "The Finnish resistance has already weakened Russia, colossus though she be, appreciably, and has eaten up great stores of oil which might otherwise have reached Germany for use against us. For that,



if for no other reason, Finland is entitled to expect gratitude and recompense. . . . Our interest is clear and there is a moral issue involved as well as the material. The whole sentiment of this country demands that Finland should not be allowed to fall." This view was also stressed frankly in the *Spectator*, *Daily Mail*, etc.

Allegation of Soviet insatiable imperialist appetites of course also stimulated the demand for aid for Finland. Playing a kind of war of nerves on Sweden and Norway the military correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post* argued that "if Finland were defeated, Scandinavia would be practically under the heel of Germany and Russia. After considering the pros and cons of Allied intervention on behalf of Finland, he said: "To sum up, a greater bid to help Finland hold the Reds now is necessary to prevent a war in Scandinavia on a large scale, and to stave off a world war."—(February 20, 1940.)

And in regard to Sweden's fear of a German attack on her should she go to the aid of Finland, the correspondent declared: "But is Sweden any better off by remaining neutral? If Finland goes down the Russians will march West and Sweden will take Finland's place, as a lone fighter against aggression."

The following day the same correspondent had another article in the *Yorkshire Post* in which he described an alleged Russian plan for subsequent invasion of Sweden and Norway and also declared that "It is known to be Russia's wish, if she gets the opportunity, to transplant the Finns into Soviet territory and replace them with Russian tribes of strong Communist leaning." Who exactly informed him of this wish of Russia—he did not deign to inform us.

The *Manchester Guardian*, February 27, 1940, in the course of a leader on the Copenhagen Conference

between Norway, Sweden and Denmark, declared :  
 "Norway and Sweden know that Finland is their bulwark and probably realise that her fate is in their hands. If they let Finland fall they fall themselves."

Similarly, Lord Davies, in the course of an interview published in the *News Chronicle*, March 1, 1940, said: "Sweden is in danger as well as Finland. She may fear Germany, but the real menace comes from Moscow."

In Finland, too, they dwelt on these alleged Soviet ambitions in the hope of persuading Sweden to join her fate to that of Finland. Thus the then Finnish Foreign Minister, M. Tanner, declared, amongst other things :

"We understand Sweden's attitude, but here we can be only of one opinion, that with the issue of Finland's fight is tied up the fate of the whole north, and if in spite of all Finland's efforts the Russian masses should reach Tornea on the Swedish frontier, it is wrong to believe they will stop there."—(*Daily Telegraph*, February 19, 1940.)

Speaking to undergraduates at Cambridge, Mr. Grippenberg (Finnish Minister in London) said :

"What they were now witnessing was nothing but an attempt by Stalinism to blast its way from the wilds of the East to the West in order to destroy the civilisation which had been built up by the Christian Church. Let there be no mistake. Stalin, who believed his attack on Finland would be a walk-over and nothing more, had it in mind to go further to Norway and Sweden as soon as he had finished with Finland."—(*Times*, February 19, 1940.)

And he repeated this allegation in a speech at a luncheon given in his honour by the English Speaking Union at Dartmouth House.

Even after peace was signed, a peace which in no way violated the independence of Finland (we deal with this subject in another chapter), allegations of Soviet imperialist aims did not cease immediately. Thus, the diplomatic correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, on March 14, 1940, declared unequivocally: "Unlike Sweden, Britain and France believed that there existed between Russia and Germany an agreement for partition of Scandinavia whereby Russia would obtain undisputed access to ports on the Atlantic seaboard of Norway, and the Nazi-Bolshevik allies, together, absolute control over the Swedish iron ore deposits in the Lulea district," and whilst conceding that Sweden did not subscribe to this view he put down Sweden's attitude to a desire to postpone the evil day.

Other journals overcame the difficulty of the facts belying their theory by stressing that the impressive resistance of the Finns would make the Soviet think twice before making any attempt on the Scandinavian countries.

On the other hand the military correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post* continued to insist that "on the whole Russia has made a first stage approach to Scandinavia."  
—(March 15, 1940.)

The *Daily Mail* was more forthright and boldly declared, March 18, that "Stalin has decided to ask the Swedish and Norwegian Governments for a free port in each country according to reports in Stockholm."

However, Sweden did not seem to be alarmed and although the report in the *Daily Mail* and the *Manchester Guardian* that "the Soviet Union had given a formal diplomatic promise that she had no further territorial demands in North-West Europe" was in all probability not strictly accurate in so far as the Soviet Government

would hardly have used this characteristic Hitlerian expression, nevertheless, the essential fact that the U.S.S.R. was not seeking territory at the expense of Sweden and the Scandinavian States generally was certainly correct.

And this was stressed by M. Molotov in his speech at the 6th Session of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., March 29, 1940, when he declared: "Our Government, on its part, considers that the Soviet Union has no points of dispute with Sweden and Norway, and that Soviet-Swedish and Soviet-Norwegian relations should develop on the basis of friendship. As to the rumours that the Soviet Union is demanding ports on the west coast of Scandinavia, claiming Narvik, etc., these rumours, spread for anti-Soviet purposes, are so wild that they need no refutation."

Thus at last did the inexorable facts kill one more anti-Soviet fable.

## CHAPTER X

### Peace Negotiations

AS we have seen in previous chapters, a vast sea of fanciful and imaginative stories all but engulfed the tiny rivulet of facts in the day to day reporting of the progress of the Soviet-Finnish hostilities. This was equally true regarding the beginning and progress of the Soviet-Finnish peace negotiations.

First peace soundings actually took place as far back as January 29, 1940, when as we learnt subsequently from a speech by the Swedish Foreign Minister, M. Günther, the Soviet Government in a Note (presumably in reply to a request or question on the subject)\* stated that they were not in principle opposed to a settlement of the dispute with Finland. They declared that it was for the Finnish Government to put forward terms, but to be acceptable these must cover all the Soviet demands made in the autumn of 1939, as well as certain new guarantees.

Talks between the U.S.S.R. and Finland with Sweden acting as the go-between continued. On February 22, 1940, M. Maisky, Soviet Ambassador in London, in response to an inquiry from the British Government as to the possibility of mediation, informed them of the Soviet peace proposals. Had the British Government responded to this Soviet gesture, it might have formed an opening for an Anglo-Soviet *rapprochement*, at the same time the British Government might perhaps have hoped to do a good turn for their own friends—the Finnish Whites—by using their good offices on their behalf. But nothing seems to have been further from

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\* That Finland had, indeed, taken the initiative to sue for peace was later confirmed by M. Tanner, then Finnish Foreign Minister.

their thoughts. On the plea that they could not countenance such harsh terms, they refused to co-operate in the re-establishment of peace between the U.S.S.R. and Finland! On the contrary, although they could not but have known how desperate was the real military position of the Finns, the British Government (and also the French Government) sought to encourage them to reject the Soviet proposals and to continue the fight. On February 25, 1940, three days after M. Maisky had communicated the terms upon which negotiations were taking place, the British Government (according to a statement made by Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons, March 13, 1940) had informed the Finnish Government that "if they were to make an appeal to us, we would be prepared, and were making preparations, to send them men as well as materials."—(*Hansard*, March 13, 1940, Col. 1165.)

· Six days later, on March 2, the British and French Ministers in Oslo made a "secret" "preliminary inquiry on whether the Norwegian Government would allow Allied forces to pass through Norway if Finland asked for help."—(*Times*, March 14, 1940.) A similar inquiry was also made in Sweden. This fact was only made known on March 14, in the course of a broadcast statement on Norwegian foreign policy by M. Koht, the then Norwegian Foreign Minister. The latter also revealed the curious fact that in the afternoon of March 12, the British Ministers in Oslo and Stockholm submitted an official request that the passage of British troops for Finland should be permitted. M. Koht added: "This came so late that a reply was unnecessary."

Whether these futile acts of the British and French Governments were made to appease those of their followers who demanded downright intervention in Finland whatever the consequences, or whether, as is



more likely, they were undertaken in the hope of encouraging the Finns to carry on their hopeless struggle so as to keep the U.S.S.R. busy in that theatre, because this was considered to be an advantage for Britain and France,\* we leave to the judgment of our readers; but whatever the reason, it showed an utterly callous disregard for Finland herself who, as was inevitable, was not only suffering grievously as a result of the war on her soil, but would stand to lose more ultimately, the longer hostilities continued.

However, to return to the way in which the peace negotiations were actually reported. The first intimation we in Britain had of the possibility of the starting of peace negotiations was a statement issued on February 25, 1940, after the conclusion of the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Norway, Sweden and Denmark. This statement merely expressed the "profound desire" of the Northern peoples for a peaceful solution of the Soviet-Finnish dispute which would "preserve the full independence of Finland." But the Copenhagen correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* declared that "In authoritative Danish circles I learned that there was a strong possibility that the Northern States would shortly make an attempt to mediate in the Russo-Finnish conflict"—(February 26, 1940)—and M. Tanner, then Finnish Foreign Minister stated: "We have no objection to friendly mediation from any quarter from which it may be offered; but our security must not be jeopardised in any way."—(*Daily Mail*, February 26, 1940.)

The British press continued to boost Finnish successes and alleged Soviet losses whilst, with a few exceptions, recording much less conspicuous, the solid Soviet gains reported by the Leningrad Military Headquarters.

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\* See Chapter on Alleged Soviet Imperialist Aims.

Appeals for help for Finland continued more fervently than ever and there was continuous speculation as to what the Finns would do after the Spring thaw had set in.

No doubt in order to stimulate the demand for more help to Finland and to encourage the Finns—it certainly could not discourage the Russians, who knew better—the diplomatic correspondent of *The Times* in the course of a long article (to which we have already referred in Chapter IV) on February 29, 1940, strove to give the impression that economic conditions in the U.S.S.R. were deteriorating, that the Soviet Government were desperately anxious for peace and that in order to attain it the Soviet Government would be prepared to drop their claim for a naval base at Hango. At the same time the correspondent said that he had learnt from the usual “trustworthy sources” that “Soviet propaganda is leading the general public in Russia to believe that the war in Finland will soon be over.”

The latter point was no doubt true enough but not quite in the sense in which the correspondent evidently wished us to take it, for the Soviet Government no doubt indeed knew that the war was drawing to a successful conclusion and they naturally did not disguise the fact from their people.

On the same day, February 29, the *Daily Telegraph* whilst holding out considerable hope of imminent Finnish successes, reported that “M. Tanner, the Finnish Foreign Minister, said yesterday that Finland had ‘no objection to friendly efforts at mediation, wherever they may come from.’”

Rumours of peace negotiations were published from time to time; thus, on March 1, 1940, the *Yorkshire Post* military correspondent stated that there was a strong impression among diplomats that peace moves

were proceeding behind the scenes. Again, on March 2, Mr. G. Cox, the *Daily Express* reporter in Finland, writing from Amsterdam, declared that he had been shown a blue print of the terms on which the Soviets would be willing to discuss peace. Stalin was represented as worried at the possibility of British and French help for Finland leading to war between the U.S.S.R. and the West. The peace terms included, so it was stated in the blue print, amongst other things the control of Petsamo Harbour for at least ten years, no demand for Hango, a Soviet-Finnish frontier which would include the Mannerheim Line within the U.S.S.R., but Viborg would remain within Finland; the frontier on the North to be drawn at Nautsi and there were to be some changes in the Finnish Government.

On March 5, 1940, Sir Paul Dukes (former British Intelligence Officer in Russia) in a letter to *The Times* insisted that the Finns were showing "no signs of succumbing to a compromise peace" and that the "most deadly blow" we could deal at Hitler would be unstinted aid to Finland "sufficient to withstand and even to throw back Stalin to the Russian frontier."

*The Times* in a leader in the same issue echoed these sentiments and on the same day the *Manchester Guardian* diplomatic correspondent declared that "reports about a pending Swedish mediation in the Finnish war" were not confirmed in London. Evidently the peace moves which, as we have seen above, had taken place with the knowledge of the British Government, but not with their assistance, were still a very closely guarded secret.

However, two days later, the *News Chronicle* stated that it was reported in Stockholm that efforts were being made to conclude an armistice, Sweden acting as mediator; that Russian terms had been rejected and

that there was a serious difference of opinion between important sections of the Finnish Army and the Government on the advisability of concluding an armistice. The following day, March 8, there were more definite reports of peace moves. The Soviet Government was said (by the Copenhagen Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*) to have transmitted their terms via the Swedish Government "nine days ago in the form of an ultimatum" expiring at midnight.

The Soviet demands were stated to include the surrender of the Karelian Isthmus, including Viborg; all territory north of Lake Ladoga; Northern Lapland, including Petsamo, and the naval base of Hango. "It is understood," said the *Daily Telegraph*, "that Finnish delegates have already made known in Stockholm the Finnish Government's refusal of the Soviet demands." Slight variations of these demands were published by various papers on subsequent days.

Inevitably too there were many allegations that Germany had a hand in pressing peace upon the two sides, but these allegations were never substantiated and were definitely denied by all parties concerned. Finally, on March 9, *The Times*, in a message from their Stockholm correspondent, stated that M. Tanner had confirmed on March 8, that contact between the two Governments had been made through intermediaries some time ago and were continuing. The correspondent explained the peace moves as being due to Russia's fear that if peace were not concluded soon the Western Powers would greatly increase their help to Finland.

Actually, it was precisely when peace talks had started and the British and French Governments knew they were proceeding even though the man in the street knew little about it—that the British and French Government and Press were most insistent in offering

their help to the Finns ; for a variety of reasons, some of which we have discussed above, they definitely did not want the conclusion of Soviet-Finnish peace.

Said the *Temps*, March 8, 1940 : " It is for the Finns to decide to-day how they should reply to the Russian demands. In weighing this decision they should call to mind that France and Britain, who have already brought them appreciable aid, are ready to furnish them with greater and more direct aid. They ought to recall also and so ought all peoples now hesitating on the edge of war—that one cannot apportion a flood and that henceforth the German peril is inseparable from the Russian peril."—(*Daily Express*, March 9, 1940.)

The Paris correspondent of the *Daily Express* said that this well summed up the French point of view. We would add that it also summed up the attitude of the British Press which, with a few exceptions, urged the Government to give generous help to Finland, appealed to Sweden to give transit facilities to British and French troops and to the Finns to fight on.

The *Sunday Times* on March 10, after referring to the help Sweden had given to Finland, declared " But it does not, and cannot, suffice for the need. That can only be adequately met by the Western Powers. They are perfectly prepared to support and defend Sweden if her Government takes action in accordance with her interests as a country whose freedom could not possibly survive a Russo-German victory." Note the insidious assumption without a shadow of proof of German participation on the side of the U.S.S.R.

*The Times'* Parliamentary Correspondent declared :

" The view generally taken was that the key to the future is still to be found rather in the West than in Scandinavia. The Finnish power of resistance is by no means exhausted,

and trustworthy information makes it clear that immediately increased aid and the sure promise of further help to come will supply the only factor still missing or doubtful in the Finnish leaders' calculations. The view was generally shared that early action was the more necessary and the better justified because the Finns themselves can hardly be likely to agree to a surrender of independence which could only stultify the decision taken when they first undertook, unaided, to stake everything upon armed resistance to Soviet aggression. Members were agreed that a firm attitude now on the part of the Allies, and of the British Government especially, would give not only Finland but her neighbours a picture of Allied intentions which at present seems to be wholly lacking."—(March 9, 1940.)

The Helsinki correspondent of *The Times* (March 9), stated definitely that both "responsible quarters" and the "general public" would not think of accepting the Russian terms. Similarly, the *Daily Telegraph* of the same date stated: "In Oslo and Helsinki it was emphasised that the Russian terms were wholly unacceptable to the Finns, and the suggestion was made that they would shortly call upon the Western Powers for further and more effective aid."

Reading the articles of the various correspondents from Helsinki, Oslo and many of the military correspondents of the daily press in these early days of March one gets the impression, in spite of an ever-increasing note of anxiety as to the position of the Finns, that the latter had been, on the whole, victorious all along the line and one could not but be bewildered at times as to why the Finns were ready to talk peace at all—let alone to have initiated these talks. No doubt this difficulty was felt by some of the writers of these despatches for now and again it was stated, or at the very least hinted, that it was the Russians who had started the peace talks!



An editorial comment by the *Sunday Express* at this period makes strange reading to-day. The writer stated :

"It is greatly to be hoped that any guarantee given to the Finns by Russia, Germany and Italy will be faithfully kept.

"On this account Britain would welcome the participation of Italy in the affair. The Italian pledge is worth a great deal more than the pledge of Nazi Germany, forsworn many times in the months that are past."— (March 10, 1940.)

We say *strange reading* in view of the terms applied to the Italian Government a few months later.

Mr. J. L. Garvin's prophecies deserve special mention for by general consent he is the most authoritative figure in the ranks of British journalism. But, as already mentioned, even that talented publicist would seem to have succumbed to Finnish Government propaganda. On February 11, 1940, he wrote in the *Observer* : "If the climax of brutality were blindly continued against Finland, the Soviet giant, flabby as huge, would bleed to death in the north."

A fortnight later Mr. Garvin was, if anything, more confirmed in his views. He declared :

"Three months more will not see the end of it. The blinding snows and sleety blizzards have begun. The swamping thaws will follow.

"If the Finns are pressed to extremity they will alter the destinies of the world. The nature of their final resistance if they are driven to it will compel intervention. The consequences would imperil the Soviet empire from end to end . . . .

"She has to operate on the scale of a major war. She has incurred a disproportionate wastage of life, machines and petrol. She would have to double that wastage to

come in sight of final success against the Finns, if she ever could."—(*Observer*, February 25, 1940.)

Even Mannerheim's propagandists must surely have rubbed their eyes when they read these words.

Another fortnight passed and by that time Mr. Garvin would appear to have realised that the Finns were approaching collapse. "It has been known and notorious for weeks that they must soon come to the limit of human power unless the world's sympathy supplied them swiftly and strongly with 'planes, guns, ammunition and men.'"—(*Observer*, March 3, 1940.)

However, according to Mr. Garvin, the rumoured Russian terms for peace were quite unacceptable to the Finns. He continued :

"The rumoured terms of a Russian ultimatum are impossible. They are worse than the terms rejected by Helsinki before the war began.

"They would throw down all Finn defences. In effect, they request Soviet annexation of historic Viipuri and of the Mannerheim zone. Losing Petsamo, Finland would be cut off from the Arctic and the nickel mines.

"Hango, at the rugged angle between the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia, is the Dover of the country and more. Near by, the Aaland Archipelago stretches right across the Baltic towards Stockholm."

And, perhaps in the hope of frightening the Kremlin, he threatened: "If they [the Finns] appeal to the Allies against unbearable Bolshevik terms, there could be no negative answer."

How fantastically absurd all this read when the truth was revealed after the signature of peace.

At last, on March 10, 1940, Helsinki issued a communiqué which stated that contact had been made

recently between the Governments of Finland and the U.S.S.R., Sweden acting as intermediary, that both parties agreed that it was desirable to bring about direct discussions and that on the invitation of the Soviet Government a Finnish Delegation had left Helsinki on March 6 consisting of the Prime Minister, M. Ryti, M. Paasikivi, member of the Government, General Walden, and M. Voionmaa, Member of Parliament. A number of meetings with representatives of the Soviet Government, stated the communiqué, had already been held.

It was generally agreed that no one outside official circles in Finland and the U.S.S.R., knew the terms laid down by the latter as an acceptable basis for peace ; this, however, did not prevent lengthy discussion of these unknown terms by various press correspondents. The Helsinki correspondent of *The Times* (March 11) averred that "indeed the whole subject of peace talk is considered in general circles with mistrust, and I have been unable to find any inclination anywhere to expect that it will lead to a positive result, as Finland is as determined as ever not to accept anything which would diminish her sovereign independence," and their diplomatic correspondent declared with assurance "... the Russians are putting forward heavy demands. They are understood to want not only the Karelian Isthmus but the North Ladoga region, Hango in the west, the demilitarisation of the Aaland Islands, and free access to Petsamo in the Arctic," and such demands, said the correspondent, would be rejected by the Finns. The diplomatic correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* (March 11) argued strongly against Finland making peace with the U.S.S.R. The latter, said the correspondent, was pursuing purely imperialist aims and giving full rein to his imagination, he came to the conclusion that if the Soviet Government could now

make peace with Finland, Turkey would, in the near future, "be seriously menaced"! He continued:

"The Russian desire for Istanbul is a much more familiar and persistent one than those wishes which have been tentatively at last expressed for an ice-free Northern Atlantic harbour—say Narvik—at Norway's expense. In any case the Russians are now in Petsamo, and it would be rash to assume that if they succeeded in imposing peace on Finland that they would ever freely abandon what they have got. The prizes of the astute, as well as the brutal aggressor, are rich ones even if they are fated not to be permanent."

Apart from the fact that the Soviet Government had never made claim to any Atlantic port at Norway's or anybody else's expense—this passage should be compared with the actual peace terms.

In the course of a leader the same day, the *Manchester Guardian* said that whilst the precise terms were not known "... it is agreed that Petsamo and the region south of it are to be ceded." Also that Russia demanded the cession of Hango. On the other hand, the *Daily Express* Helsinki correspondent stated that "neutral observers are inclined to believe that the Russians have dropped their claim to Hango—since the Finns could never accede to it. *The Times* in a long leader, argued that it was Germany which stood most to gain from the conclusion of peace between the U.S.S.R. and Finland. The leader urged the latter to continue resistance, that their cause, which was a common cause with Great Britain and France, was not lost, and added: "There is still uncertainty as to the exact nature of the peace terms demanded of the Finnish Government; but whatever they may be, it should be put beyond doubt that, fighting or negotiating, Finland will have resolute backing. Help has been slowly—all too slowly—organised, but can be made formidable. Finland,

in defending herself, is defending Scandinavia."—  
(March 11, 1940.)

On March 11, Mr. Chamberlain, in reply to questions in the House of Commons, stated that both the French and British Governments had sent and were continuing to send valuable material assistance to the Finnish forces and that the British and French Governments "have already informed the Finnish Government, they are prepared, in response to an appeal from them for further aid, to proceed immediately and jointly, to the help of Finland, using all available resources at their disposal."—(*Hansard*, March 11, 1940, col. 837.) He also stated that he had no reliable information regarding Soviet-Finnish peace negotiations.

However, the next day the correspondents continued to discuss at length the supposed peace terms, and their modifications, which were said to include the substitution by the Russians of a demand for the Uto Isle instead of Hango which the Finns were so unwilling to surrender. Although, moreover, it was reported that the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Finnish Parliament had received the terms by cable from Moscow and had recommended their acceptance, the chances for the conclusion of peace, so said many correspondents, were only fifty-fifty.

The *Daily Express* political correspondent also declared that "the Finnish Government received over the week-end a Note from London and Paris, telling it that all the military power of the Allies was ready to help them if the Soviet Government insisted on impossible conditions."—(March 12, 1940.)

But that the military position of the Finns was becoming desperate could not be concealed entirely, and some of the Helsinki and other correspondents did give hints of this fact from time to time. Finally, on

March 13, it was announced that Soviet-Finnish peace had been signed on March 12, 1940, and it then became known that the negotiations in Moscow for the conclusion of peace had started on March 7, the representatives of the U.S.S.R. being MM. V. M. Molotov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars for the U.S.S.R. and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs; A. A. Zhdanov, member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., and Brigade Commander A. M. Vasilevsky, on the one side, and representatives of the Republic of Finland—Mr. R. Ryti, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Finland; Minister J. K. Passikivi; General K. R. Walden, and Professor V. Voionmaa, on the other.

Now that Finland had definitely decided not to continue the struggle by the conclusion of peace, the unvarnished truth began to peep out more and more in regard to the military position which had led up to the negotiations.

In all the discussions regarding the whys and wherefores of the Finnish acceptance of terms admittedly more onerous than those their Government could have obtained in November, 1939, practically all the correspondents stressed that the Finnish army had not been defeated! What exactly this meant we are at a loss to understand, for practically in the same breath, at any rate in the same articles, they also told us that the Finnish troops were utterly exhausted and had been, as one correspondent said "pushed to the very edge of human endurance."

To give a few examples. On March 14, Mr. Tanner, the then Finnish Foreign Minister, in a broadcast to the Finnish people, paid a high tribute to the fighting qualities of the Finnish army, but declared that without reinforcements they could not possibly continue the



fight. The Western Powers, he said, had offered to send an expeditionary force, but afraid of the violation of their strict neutrality, Norway and Sweden—across whose territory lay the only practicable route for such a force—refused permission for a free passage. When it became apparent that they could not rely on sufficient foreign help on a large scale, further struggle was seen to be hopeless and, continued Mr. Tanner, "we began to consider the possibilities of peace, and for several weeks we have been in contact with the Soviet Government. In spite of this the Soviet Union continued the war with the same violence. It must be unique in history that a country's delegation should travel to the enemy's capital without an armistice being declared." —(*Times*, March 14, 1940.)

We would remark here in regard to Mr. Tanner's complaint that in view of the open declarations of the preparation of large expeditionary forces for aiding the Finns by various Powers, it was surely natural that the Soviet Government should refuse an armistice which would have given additional time for the organisation and strengthening of such forces and of discovering ways and means of "persuading" Norway and Sweden to grant permission for their transit. That it was indeed contemplated that if necessary the opposition of Sweden and Norway could be brushed aside was subsequently made clear for instance by Pertinax who declared unequivocally :

"On March 1 the French and British representatives at Helsinki told M. Rysto Ryti, the Finnish Premier, and his colleagues that their respective Governments were ready to send troops to Finland without delay as soon as they had received an appeal from the Finnish Cabinet for direct assistance. The explanation was added that *no opposition on the part of Norway and Sweden would be countenanced.*

"Later the French and British Governments went a step further. A new French Minister had been hastily appointed to Helsinki—M. Vaux Saint Cyr, a much more energetic man than his predecessor. He was authorised to declare that in order to help Finland all available resources of both France and England would be used—the very expression Mr. Chamberlain and M. Daladier used in the House of Commons and in the Chamber of Deputies on Monday and Tuesday respectively."—(*Daily Telegraph*, March 14, 1940.) (Our italics.)

Similarly, the political correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post*, in the course of his discussion of why the Finns had made peace, declared :

"It is no secret that the obstacle to effective Allied intervention on Finland's behalf was the refusal of Sweden and Norway—and particularly Sweden—to provide facilities.

"But the Allies were not disposed to allow this attitude of negation on the part of the Scandinavian Powers to be the last word, and this is understood to have been made clear to the Finns when the Allies made their offer of assistance."—(March 14, 1940.)

True, Mr. Chamberlain, in the House of Commons, said that "there had never been any question of violating the neutrality of Sweden and Norway," but as the diplomatic correspondent of *The Times* wrote on March 15, 1940 :

"There never was any intention to attempt such passage without the good will of the two countries. Even with good will transport would be highly difficult ; without it, extremely hazardous. In the end it was thought that only by a *direct appeal from the Finns under Article XVI. of the League* could a way be opened."—(Our italics.)

It may be as well to give here the facts of the aid rendered to Finland by France, Britain and Sweden, as disclosed later by official statements.

As regards the help given by France, this was made public by M. Daladier, the then French Premier, in a statement to the French Chamber, on March 12, 1940. In this he declared :

" France heads the list of nations which have sent war material to the Finnish Government and people. Since the early days of December until to-day France had sent : 145 planes, 496 guns, 5,000 machine-guns, 400,000 rifles, 200,000 hand-grenades, and 20,000,000 rounds of ammunition.

" A few days ago, in reply to an urgent request from the Finnish Government, France sent ultra-modern bombers which have certainly arrived on the Finnish front by now.

" Finland had repeatedly thanked France for the help given."—(*Manchester Guardian*, March 13, 1940.)

M. Daladier also disclosed in the same speech that on February 3, 1940, the Supreme War Council had taken a decision to send trained men too, to Finland, and since February 22, the French troops of the Expeditionary Force had been equipped and assembled and that a large number of ships had been waiting in two great ports of the Channel, ready to leave as soon as the order was given.

As for the help of the British Government—this was made known in a speech in the House of Commons, March 19, 1940, by Mr. Chamberlain, who stressed that Britain had given all the aid to Finland it possibly could under the circumstances and that "no appeal that was made to us by the Finnish Government remained unanswered." He also gave the following list of things asked for by the Finns and those actually sent :

" Aeroplanes promised, 152 ; actually sent, 101. Guns of all kinds promised, 223 ; sent, 114. Shells promised, 297,200 ; actually sent, 185,000. Vickers guns promised, 100 ; all sent. Marine mines promised, 500 ; sent, 400.

Hand-grenades promised, 50,000; all sent. Aircraft bombs promised, 20,700; sent, 15,700. Signalling equipment promised, 1,300 sets; sent, 800. Anti-tank rifles promised, 200; all sent. Respirators promised, 60,000; all sent. Greatcoats promised, 100,000; all sent. Battle-dress suits promised, 100,000; all sent. Anti-tank mines promised, 20,000; sent, 10,000. Ambulances promised, 48; all sent.

"The list includes many minor items such as medical stores, tents, equipment, sandbags, steel helmets, sand, etc., and also large quantities of small arms ammunition, and I may add, in fact, that arrangements were made here for the manufacture of very large supplies of ammunition and ammunition cases."—(*Hansard*, March 19, 1940, Col. 1840-41.)

He added "everything was done to despatch these articles with the minimum of delay."

On the same day, in the course of an official statement issued in Stockholm, facts and figures were given of Swedish help to Finland from which it appeared that since the outbreak of Soviet-Finnish hostilities, Sweden had sent to Finland "90,000 rifles, 2,000,000 cartridges, 80 anti-tank guns, and 250 pieces of artillery, including 100 anti-aircraft guns, of which Finland had only four at the outbreak of war."—(*Manchester Guardian*, March 20, 1940.)

As the war went on, said the statement, the stream of ammunition increased. Sweden also sent benzine and a big cargo of coal, as well as gifts of money and considerable credits.

But to return to the reports of the military position after the conclusion of peace, *The Times*, Stockholm correspondent, in a message dated March 13, declared: "There can be no doubt that the Red Army's success in breaking through the third and strongest line of the

Finnish defences on the Summa front towards the end of February provided the immediate prelude to the Moscow negotiations."

He described the nature of the Mannerheim Line and the way in which the Red forces ultimately succeeded in shaking its foundations. On February 10, said the correspondent, the Russians launched their heaviest attack when the defence was weakest, and continued: "Red tanks were then sent forward, and there began the conquest of the forts. The Finns rushed up some cavalry reinforcements, the Tavast Light Horse, but the regiment was practically wiped out. This was the first time that Finnish confidence was shaken."

Mr. Ward Price, summing up the situation in the *Daily Mail* on March 14, declared:

"Public opinion in this country has been startled by the sudden collapse of the splendid Finnish resistance. Almost up to the last we were told that the Finns could hold on till the spring. But for some time the military censorship in Finland had been much stricter than at first and these optimistic expectations were based on insufficient knowledge of the facts at the front."

Similarly, Mr. A. J. Cummings, in the *News Chronicle* of the same date stated:

"No exact estimate of the Finnish losses in the final struggle for the Mannerheim Line are yet available; but I know from an authentic source that they were much heavier than the outside world has ever been given to understand, and that thousands of Finnish soldiers, fighting day after day without relief and practically without sleep were too exhausted even to obey orders to retire."

It may be remarked here that all the correspondents now, as before, insisted on the magnificent fight put up by the Finns but stressed their weakness in numbers. Evidently, however, there must have been a grave

miscalculation by Marshal Mannerheim, who, as the Diplomatic Correspondent of *The Times* (March 15), informed us. "... Soon after the New Year, Field-Marshal Mannerheim . . . estimated that he would require an extra 30,000 men to take the field in May after the late snows and the thaw."\* "Later, however," added the correspondent, "when the full weight of the Soviet attack was felt, it was clear that he would be glad of all the men that could be spared."

Again, the *Daily Telegraph* Helsinki correspondent, in a message dated March 18, paid the usual warm tribute to the Finnish army and stated that it was unbeaten, etc., but also pointed out that "without outside reinforcements the Finnish command had to risk a large-scale military catastrophe or accept a peace before an amazing defence could crack," and he continued: "According to reliable sources, Field-Marshal Mannerheim advised the Finnish Government to negotiate peace on the best terms they could get, bearing in mind that the Finnish Army was still undefeated, and also the price that would very likely have to be paid in another month or two."

The correspondent further declared that there had been no public criticism in Finland of the decision by the

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\* This was subsequently confirmed by Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons, March 19, 1940, when in the course of his speech he declared:—

"In the middle of January our representative was informed by Field-Marshal Mannerheim that he did not then require men, as his resources in man-power were sufficient, in his opinion, to last until the thaw came. He did, however, say that he would be very glad to have some 30,000 men in May, but he stipulated that they should be trained soldiers. I ask the House to bear in mind these two facts—30,000 men, to arrive in Finland in May."—*Hansard*, Column 1841.)

Mr. Chamberlain also stated that plans were made in accordance with the Finnish requests and that 100,000 "heavily armed and equipped" men were ready to sail at the beginning of March. Reinforcements would be sent later if required.



Ryti Government to seek peace and that it was generally recognised throughout the country that there was no other choice.

On the following day, the reason which caused Finland to seek as speedy a peace as possible was made even more clear by the same correspondent. After stating that nearly one-fifth of the Finnish army could be numbered among the Finnish casualties (the Russians put these casualties much higher) he declared :

“ Once the Russians had broken through to the outskirts of Viborg and had crossed the ice of Viborg Bay to obtain a firm hold on its north-western shores, the Finnish troops had poor cover in many places, and were terribly punished.

“ This is why *the Finnish High Command sent message after message to M. L. Ryti's delegation in Moscow, urging peace immediately and at virtually any price.*”—(*Daily Telegraph*, March 20, 1940.) (Our italics.)

And he went on to point out that had hostilities continued for another two or three weeks, the losses (on the Finnish side) might have become “ catastrophic.” Concluding, the correspondent averred : “ Thus a major military disaster seems to have been avoided only by the precipitate peace. Field-Marshal Mannerheim's ‘ secrecy ’ policy had paid big dividends, for at that time no one in Finland, save the leaders on her General Staff, knew *how desperate the Army's situation had become.*” (Our italics.)

Finally, Mr. G. Steer, summing up the situation which led to the peace, in the course of a very anti-Soviet article declared that “ only the troops in Viborg Bay and north-east of Viborg knew how grave the situation was.”—(*Daily Telegraph*, April 8, 1940), and he added : “ On every front the Finns had the upper hand except in the Isthmus of Karelia and around the

defensive position to which the Russians retired at Salla. There the Finns were unable to cut the Red communications without serious loss of man-power." The Finns, he maintained, had the best of the fight on all fronts but "on the Isthmus they failed heroically. That cost them the war and their 'honourable surrender.'"

This means, if we accept this estimate of the fighting, that the Finns had won every battle except the last one, and as we know from the last world war and many other wars in which Great Britain was involved, it is the last battle that counts in ultimate victory. No doubt the Soviet High Command, too, knew this when they planned their strategy.

We are not concerned here with the discussion of the significance of Soviet superiority of numbers, to what extent this gave or did not give them any great military advantage in the given geographical conditions, nor are we concerned with comparing the military strategy of the two sides, etc.—of all this we treat in other chapters—but we simply stress here that once an army, big or small, is unable to fight any longer, for whatever reason, it is, in effect, a defeated army, and to accept the contrary simply does not make sense. Finland was anxious to make peace because her army was no longer in a position to carry on the fight with any hope whatever of success. The strong Mannerheim defences had been stormed. Finland now lay at the mercy of the Red Army, for British and French aid to the Finns which might have been sent in response to a Finnish appeal after a rejection of the Soviet peace terms would undoubtedly, as was generally agreed at the time, have arrived too late to save Finland from an overwhelming defeat.

We know the fate of a weak country which has been defeated and is at the mercy of a big Power. We know

how Germany has treated countries like Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc. We know how Italy treated Albania and Abyssinia, to give but a few examples—how did the Soviet Union use her power?

Contrary to all the prognostications that Finland's independence would be at an end should the U.S.S.R. emerge victorious, nothing of the kind happened and the Helsinki correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* no doubt knew what he was talking about when he declared subsequently: "While there will be no attempt to challenge or offend Russia, Finland will maintain her independence, and there is no tendency in official quarters to believe that Russia will cease to respect it."—(March 27, 1940.)

The aim of the U.S.S.R. pursued in the peace terms was to render her position in the Gulf of Finland secure and to make it impossible once for all that Finland should ever be used (as she was used in 1917-20) as a jumping-off ground for an attack on Leningrad, and also to provide for the security of Murmansk and the Murmansk railway. Accordingly, the peace terms provided for the transfer to the U.S.S.R. of the Finnish part of the Karelian Isthmus with the town of Viborg and Viborg Bay, the Western and Northern Shores of Lake Ladoga with the towns of Kexholm, Sortavala, Suojärvi, a number of Islands of strategic value in the Gulf of Finland; territory east of Merkjärvi with the town of Kuolajärvi and part of the Rybachi and Sredny Peninsulas. Further, Finland agreed to lease the Peninsula of Hango and its territorial waters to the U.S.S.R. for a term of 30 years for the purpose of constructing a naval base capable of defending the entrance to the Gulf of Finland against aggression.

It may be pointed out here that the Hango Peninsula is of first class importance for this purpose. Hango

forms an excellent port capable of accommodating a large fleet and navigation is possible practically the whole year round. Numerous rocky islands in the neighbourhood of the peninsula form a natural protection against enemy war craft. During the conflict Hango was often referred to even by critics of the Soviets as the "Gibraltar of the Baltic."

The U.S.S.R., on the other hand, withdrew from Petsamo leaving this port in the possession of Finland, but as also provided for in the 1920 Soviet-Finnish Peace Treaty, Finland undertook not to establish on her Northern Arctic coasts military or naval ports, not to maintain in these Northern waters submarines or armed aircraft, any naval or other armed ships except minor ones. The U.S.S.R. and its citizens received, again as provided for in the 1920 Treaty, the right of transit across the Petsamo region to Norway and back. Provisions were also made for the right of freight transit between the U.S.S.R. and Norway and the U.S.S.R. and Sweden across the Petsamo region and for the establishment of a civilian Soviet air service between the U.S.S.R. and Norway across the Petsamo area.

The Treaty further provided for the construction of railway communications between the town of Kandalaksha, on the White Sea, and the town of Kemijärvi, and for the renewal of trade and economic relations between the U.S.S.R. and Finland. The full text of the Treaty and the protocol appended thereto will be found in the Appendix.

It has been asked : if the Soviet Government thought that the terms for an Agreement which they offered Finland in November, 1939, sufficient to safeguard the security of the U.S.S.R. why should they, in March, 1940, have insisted on such more severe terms ? The

answer it seems to us is obvious. In the first place the U.S.S.R. had lost many valuable lives and expended huge quantities of material wealth. Any other country in her place would have demanded a considerable indemnity from the defeated, but the Soviet Government asked for no monetary indemnity. Secondly, had a Soviet-Finnish Treaty been concluded peacefully in November giving the U.S.S.R. the safeguards she demanded, this would in itself have given some proof of Finnish goodwill and the possibility of peaceful co-operation in the mutual defence of their respective territories.

On the other hand, the peace concluded in March, 1940, was with a hostile Finnish Government—a Government which knew, before hostilities started, that it could not by itself withstand the Soviet attack and openly appealed for and relied on the ultimate help of countries which, as has been shown throughout the history of the existence of the Soviet Government, were in one form or another definitely hostile to the latter.

Under such circumstances one could hardly expect the Soviets to leave Finland in such a position that, at a more favourable opportunity, she might be used by one Power or another, or by a combination of Powers, for an attack on the U.S.S.R.

Even so, not only has Finnish independence not been encroached upon, but even *The Times* military correspondent (March 14, 1940), referring to the Peace Treaty, declared that: "Hard though it be, it is less severe than the territorial clauses of other similar treaties of recent times." It is only fair to add that this correspondent considered that Finland owed these easier terms to the fact that her army had not been defeated!

Nine months passed—ample time for reflection—and *The Times* in its review of the year's events gave it as

its considered judgment that "the peace terms were not, in the event, unduly harsh." And later still, in May, 1941, Commander Stephen King-Hall, M.P., commenting on the Soviet-Finnish war, said:

"The Soviet Union declared, and its subsequent behaviour supported the view that the Russians were speaking the truth, that its object in making war on Finland was that of securing certain territories and frontier adjustments which would improve the strategical position of Russia in the Baltic. The Russians explicitly denied that they wished to absorb Finland into the Soviet Union, and this implied that the Russians 'freely and willingly' accepted the settlement which had created (in 1918) an independent Finnish State, out of what had been for some time a Russian province.

"The Russians won a complete military victory but confined their demands to the territorial readjustments. It may be supposed that had they wished to do so, the Russians could have annexed Finland."—(*News Letter*, May 22, 1941.)

There still remains the question of the Provisional Government formed at Terijoki on December 1, 1939, with Kuusinnen (a veteran Finnish revolutionary) at its head. The Soviet Government had recognised the Kuusinnen Government as the Government of Finland, and on December 2 concluded with it a Mutual Assistance Pact; during the Soviet-Finnish hostilities, the Terijoki Government fought on the side of the Soviets.

Much play was made in the British press on the fact that, in the end, the Soviets made peace with the Ryti-Tanner Government and that the Kuusinnen Government took no part in the negotiations and was ultimately dissolved. Stories were told that the Soviets had actually arrested the members of the Terijoki Government, Kuusinnen himself was reported variously according to "the taste and inclination" of the reporters,



to have been imprisoned, exiled and executed; all these stories were nothing but barefaced—lies. Kuusinnen had never been arrested by the Soviets and actually became the head of the new Karelian-Finnish-Soviet Republic (formed by the Union of Soviet Karelia and former Finnish Karelia).\*

As a matter of fact the relations of the Soviet Government with the Terijoki Government illustrated strikingly the Soviet respect for the independence of Finland. No doubt when the Terijoki Government was formed it was thought or hoped that it might receive sufficiently wide popular support among the Finnish people to overthrow the bourgeois Government of that time and the military and Fascist cliques which to a large extent were the real rulers of Finland. This did not eventuate—whether because the Schutz Corps (protective guards) and Fascists were too strong or because the masses of the Finnish people were not yet prepared for a whole-hearted Socialist Government is immaterial to the argument—but the fact was that the Terijoki Government did not gain power over the whole of Finland.

Any Imperialist Power faced with this position and having Finland at her mercy as the Soviets then had, would undoubtedly have simply ridden rough-shod over the bourgeois Central Finnish Government and forced upon the country the Government which she had recognised a few months previously.

This, for example, is exactly what Germany and Italy did in Spain in regard to the Franco Government, which was certainly not supported by the majority of the Spanish people, and what they have since done in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, etc.

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\* Kuusinnen is Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Presidium of the Karelian-Finnish Socialist Soviet Republic and Vice-Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.

The Soviet Government acted otherwise, it declared that the form of Government in Finland was the affair of the Finns themselves and after consultation between the Soviet and Terijoki Governments the latter agreed to dissolve itself.

The way in which the Soviet people regarded the whole matter was well summed up in the following passages of a leading article in *Izvestia*, March 14, 1940:

"The Treaty means something more than the immediate cessation of hostilities between the Soviet Union and Finland. It eliminates an anti-Soviet war base which for decades was prepared by our enemies with such diligence at the very gate of Leningrad. It simultaneously strengthens the security of the entire coast of the Gulf of Finland and the Murmansk railway—this most important artery of our north, and Murmansk itself. The Treaty of March 12 ensures this security not only through reasonable and just shifting of the Soviet-Finnish frontier. It simultaneously lays the foundation for the development of stable and good neighbourly relations between the two countries.

"The clauses of the Treaty concerning the transit of Soviet freights across the Petsamo region to Norway, concerning the joint construction by the Soviet Union and Finland of a new railway for the development of transit and goods between the U.S.S.R. and Sweden show that the Treaty of March 12 lays a stable foundation for Soviet-Finnish economic collaboration as well. This is fully corroborated by the clause for the restoration of economic relations between the two countries and for the beginning of negotiations for a trade agreement.

*"Neither in spirit nor in letter does the Treaty affect in the slightest extent the independence and sovereign rights of the Republic of Finland, the independence which she received from the Soviet State 22 years ago.*

"The significance of the Treaty of March 12 goes far beyond the limits of the relations between the two

signatories. This Treaty represents a real triumph for the peace policy of the Soviet Union. It shows firstly that the Soviet Union neither in diplomatic negotiations nor after a successful test of arms, presents even its smallest neighbours with terms incompatible with their national dignity or infringing in any way their national independence. It shows, secondly, that after presenting just demands the Soviet Union has every possibility to ensure their realisation in the shortest time, even in the most unfavourable conditions . . . ."

These and similar views were expressed at numerous meetings of workers, peasants and intelligentsia throughout the U.S.S.R. on the day following the conclusion of the Soviet-Finnish Peace Treaty.

The Treaty was ratified by the Finnish Seim by 145 to 3 on March 15, 1940; the following day the ratification was signed by the President, M. Kallio. On March 19, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. ratified the Treaty and on March 20 an exchange of ratifications took place at the Kremlin between M. Molotov for the Soviet Government and MM. Paasikivi and Voionmaa, who had arrived in Moscow for this purpose the previous day, on behalf of the Government of Finland.

MM. Paasikivi and Voionmaa remained in Moscow for some time after the conclusion of peace in order to negotiate on a number of matters arising out of the Peace Treaty. This, as might perhaps have been expected, gave rise to reports from time to time of further Soviet demands on Finland; none of these was, however, substantiated and were subsequently denied officially.

The Finns, having withdrawn from the territory ceded to the U.S.S.R., a mixed Soviet-Finnish Commission began work in Viipuri on April 2, on the exact delimitation of the frontier between the U.S.S.R. and Finland,

and after completing its work, disbanded on April 13, 1940. In the meantime, in April, diplomatic relations were re-established by the appointment of Soviet and Finnish Ministers to Helsinki and Moscow respectively. On April 10, Soviet Forces, in accordance with the provisions of the Peace Treaty, completed their evacuation from the Petsamo territory after repairing all damage caused by the war. All the port equipment was handed over in perfect order, broken windows replaced and even the streets were swept before the Soviet troops left.

On April 12 occurred the formal transfer to Finland of towns in the Petsamo district that had been occupied by Red Army troops. Damages had been repaired by the Red Army before the transfer was made. The official announcement read :—

“ In accordance with the protocol appended to the peace treaty between the U.S.S.R. and Finland, special representatives of the Red Army Command handed over to special representatives of the Finnish Command, Petsamo and the port of Liinahamara with municipal buildings, equipment and local industrial enterprises.

“ On April 19 both parties signed a protocol noting that the Red Army Command had restored in Petsamo the telephone and telegraph station, two power stations, electric wires, waterworks, central heating in a number of buildings and in Liinahamara—moorages, and that all enterprises were handed over to representatives of the Finnish Army in working condition.”

Henceforth, relations between the U.S.S.R. and Finland became steadily more normal and negotiations for a Trade Agreement proceeded amicably, resulting in the conclusion of such an instrument on June 28, 1940. The Trade Agreement provided for mutual most-favoured nation treatment, as well as for the establishment of a Soviet Trade Representation in

Helsinki as in other countries, and it was envisaged that Finland would supply the Soviet Union with tugboats, lighters, electrical equipment, copper wire, leather, industrial paper, animal fats, meat and other goods. The Soviet Union would supply Finland with wheat and rye, oil products, manganese ore, cotton, tobacco and other goods.

On July 20, 1940, it was reported from Helsinki that following an agreement between the U.S.S.R. and Finland, two Soviet trains, consisting of 50 waggons laden with war materials required for the reconstruction of the Hango area had passed through Helsinki on the previous day. At the same time, in view of the cessation of Soviet-Finnish hostilities and the return to normal conditions in the Baltic, Finland, in the middle of July, 1940, started the rapid evacuation of troops and material from the Aaland Isles. Since then, in spite of attempts in various organs of the press to spread alarmist rumours of dissensions and worsening of Soviet-Finnish relations the latter have been perfectly normal and Finnish independence has been respected scrupulously by the Soviets.

The following communique issued by the Tass Agency, June 8, 1941, was a further illustration of the normal relations maintained by the U.S.S.R. towards Finland :

" Up to June 1 this year Finland delivered to the Soviet Union 885,600 American dollars' worth of goods only, while the Soviet Union delivered to Finland during the same period 3,559,200 American dollars' worth of goods. Considering that in accordance with the existing trade agreement between the U.S.S.R. and Finland the total trade turnover between the two countries during the first year of operation of the Agreement was fixed at 7,500,000 American dollars for each Party, this means that the U.S.S.R. has delivered to Finland about 47.4 per cent.,

whereas Finland has delivered to the Soviet Union 11.4 per cent. The unsatisfactory fulfilment by Finland of her undertaking as regards trade turnover certainly could not contribute to the further development of trade between the U.S.S.R. and Finland.

"Considering, however, Finland's present food difficulties, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R., Stalin, on May 30, promised the Finnish Minister in the U.S.S.R., Paasikivi, to ship to Finland within the shortest possible time 20,000 tons of grain in addition to the previously delivered 15,579 tons, for the present overlooking the fact that Finland is badly discharging her undertakings as regards goods deliveries to the Soviet Union. On May 31, the People's Commissar for Foreign Trade of the U.S.S.R., Mikoyan, advised the Finnish Minister, Paasikivi, that he had instructed Exportkhleb immediately to start shipment of the above-mentioned quantity of grain to Finland. Of this quantity, up to June 6 inclusive, 7,514 tons had already been shipped to Finland by rail."

There has been no shadow of "obscurity," "enigma" or "mystery" (the terms applied so frequently by writers in regard to the U.S.S.R.) in the policy pursued by the U.S.S.R. vis-a-vis Finland as also vis-a-vis the Baltic States—her aim has been to make herself as secure as possible against any enemy approaching her shores from the Baltic or the Gulf of Finland. Having secured this aim she has abstained, despite all the prophecies to the contrary, from any imperialist policy; she did not attack Sweden or Norway, nor did she endeavour to obtain an outlet to the Atlantic at the expense of these or any other countries.



## CHAPTER XI

### Soviet News Reliable

WHEN news was received that the Finns had accepted the Soviet peace terms, there was general amazement. The reason for this is not far to seek. In spite of the fact that, as we have indicated in previous chapters, a note of anxiety as to the position of the Finns had crept into the reports of the last phases of the campaign, nevertheless, in the main, the stories from Finland tended to ignore the Soviet communiqués and based themselves almost solely on Finnish official statements. For instance, Virginia Cowles in a report from Helsinki declared :

"No foreign correspondent here in Finland is allowed to visit any front whatsoever when a battle is taking place. All correspondents have been barred from the Isthmus for over a month now. *They must rely for their news on the official communiqué which is handed out in Helsinki each evening.* The communique on land operations averages about 150 words ; anything more that is written about the actual fighting, therefore, *must be conjecture.*"—(*Sunday Times*, March 10, 1940. Our italics.)

This was also made clear by a number of correspondents particularly after the conclusion of peace, as we have also shown in previous chapters. All stories from Finland, be it noted, were subject to the strictest censorship.

Bearing in mind the fact that reports from Finland were based on Finnish Government sources, let us now compare these stories with the Soviet official communiqués. At first the Soviet reports were very laconic but very frequently they reported some advance ; we

take at random one such report, On December 5, 1939, the Soviet press published the following communiqué from the Headquarters of the Leningrad Military District:

"The troops of the Leningrad Military District continued their advance during December 4.

"In the Murmansk direction our troops, following up the dispersed group of Finnish troops at Petsamo, have moved forward by 25 miles to the south of Petsamo.

"At the port of Petsamo our troops are clearing the harbour from the mines laid by the Finns.

"In the Ukhtinsk Rebofsk and Porosozersk directions our troops have advanced by 45 to 50 kilometres from the State frontier.

"In the Petrozavodsk direction, our troops, having occupied the town of Salmi on the shores of Lake Ladoga and the railway station of Loimola north of Salmi, are continuing their advance.

"On the Karelian Isthmus our detachments have advanced 40 to 45 kilometres from the state frontier.

"In view of the unfavourable flying weather there was no military air activity."

This and similar reports on other days were never proved inaccurate, although little notice of them was taken by our press. At other times the Soviet communiqués denied fantastic reports of the fighting appearing in the foreign press. For instance, on December 8, 1939, the Soviet press, in addition to giving details of further advances of their troops, denied as a "pure invention" the report that the "Kirov" and a Soviet destroyer had been seriously damaged off Hango by Finnish coastal artillery. Neither the "Kirov" nor any other warship had been damaged in this or any other way.

The Soviet press of the same date also carried the following denial :

" Reports have appeared in the foreign press that the troops of the Leningrad Military District, in the course of the fighting with Finnish troops, lost 32 tanks and 16 aeroplanes.

" The Headquarters of the Leningrad Military District declares that this is a pure invention. During the whole period of the operations only two Soviet aeroplanes were shot down and two others, having lost their bearings as a result of bad weather, eventually landed on Finnish soil.

" We, on the other hand, have brought down 11 Finnish aeroplanes. All the tanks which have been operating since November 30 are still in our possession and the Finns have not taken a single one of our tanks."

The communiqué continued :

" The Havas Agency has reported that ' as a result of raids by Finnish aeroplanes in the Murmansk area, apparently at least 60 Russian aeroplanes were destroyed.'

" The Headquarters of the Leningrad Military District declares that this too is a pure invention, since there have been no Finnish or other air raids in the Murmansk area."

Later a report that the battleship " Oktyaberskaya Revolutsia " had been sunk by Finnish coastal artillery was also denied and proved to have been a lie.

On subsequent days, the Soviet press published similar short reports of advances along various parts of the front. Not a single one of their claims were ever proved to have been false. When things were quiet, the Soviet command made no claims. Thus, on December 21 and 22 the Soviet press only reported a slight exchange of fire between reconnoitring detachments and an intensive exchange of artillery fire on the Karelian Isthmus. There had been reconnaissance flights and on the 22nd there was also a very short report

of an air battle in which the Soviets claimed to have shot down 10 enemy planes.

On December 23, 1939, the Soviet press published a more lengthy summary of the first three weeks' fighting issued by the Headquarters of the Leningrad Military Area :

“ Summing up the results for the past three weeks of hostilities in Finland, one must admit that the Soviet troops scored important successes during this period. In North Finland the Soviet troops, having occupied on December 1 the port of Petsamo, advanced 130 kilometres into the interior of Finland, counting from the coast of the Barents Sea near Petsamo ; this represents 6 kilometres a day. In the Uleaborg direction Soviet troops advanced 150 kilometres or an average  $7\frac{1}{2}$  kilometres a day. In the Serdobol direction the Soviet troops advanced 80 kilometres, or on an average 4 kilometres a day. In the Viborg direction the Soviet troops advanced 64 kilometres from the State frontier, or on an average 3.2 kilometres per day. On all directions the Soviet troops captured 18 officers, 105 non-commissioned officers, 1,302 privates, 35 cannons, 300 machine guns, 3,000 rifles, 21 trench mortars, 220 grenade throwers, 7 armoured cars.

“ Soviet casualties were 1,823 killed, 7,000 wounded. The Finns lost 2,200 killed found on territory occupied by the Soviet troops not counting those killed on enemy's territory by fire from the Soviet artillery and machine guns and picked up and taken to the rear by the Finnish troops. According to approximate figures at the disposal of Headquarters, the number of wounded Finns exceeded 10,000.

“ The foreign Press, especially the French and British, regards this rate of advance of the Soviet troops as too slow, attempting to explain this by ‘ the low fighting capacity ’ of the Red Army. Some military observers go even further, asserting that the offensive of the Soviet troops ‘ failed ’ since there was no lightning blow and Soviet troops failed to wipe out the Finnish troops in

one week. Undoubtedly such vilification of the Red Army can only be explained either by overt and crude slanders against the Red Army or by the 'observers' ignorance of military affairs.

"The territory of Finland presents most serious difficulties for the movements of troops. The lack of roads and rugged terrain, impassable forests, innumerable lakes—divided by innumerable isthmuses spanned by several lines of defences consisting of concrete gun and machine-gun emplacements with concrete refuges for troops—these are the conditions hindering the rapid advance of the troops on Finland's territory. Finland was building these fortifications for four years with the aid of three foreign States which fought among themselves for influence in Finland as the base for an attack on Leningrad and later on Moscow.

"In its defence power this system of artificial fortifications, as for instance, on the Karelian Isthmus, reinforced by Finland's natural conditions, is in no way inferior to the defence power of the fortified Siegfried Line of the Western frontier of Germany, against which the Anglo-French troops, during four months, have not made the slightest progress. The Red Army know of these difficulties in Finland and therefore never expected to annihilate the Finnish troops by one lightning blow. Only ignorance or open hostility towards the Red Army could attribute to the Commanding Staff of the Red Army the intention to overcome the Finnish troops within one week.

"The Karelian Isthmus is a most difficult area covered with a dense network of fortifications spanning the area between Lake Ladoga and the Bay of Finland near Viborg. In this area Soviet troops advanced, on an average, at a speed of 3.2 kilometres a day and Finland's principal line of defence, the so-called Mannerheim Line, is already broken by the Soviet troops in several places. If one compares this rate of progress of the Red Army in the area of the Mannerheim Line with that which is being made by the Anglo-French troops in the area of the

Siegfried Line, one is bound to admit that the Soviet troops have scored an important success."

The subsequent progress of the campaign proved that all the claims made in the above communiqué were accurate.

When the Soviet armies suffered a reverse, the Soviet reports did not hide the fact. Thus, from December 23, 1939, to January 9, 1940, reports in the Soviet Press were short, laconic statements that nothing much was happening at the front, although now and again there were also short reports of air battles and Soviet air attacks on Finland. But on January 10 the Soviet Press published the following communiqué from the Headquarters of the Leningrad Military District :

" On January 9th, in the direction of Ukhtinsk, infantry battles took place, as a result of which our troops retreated some kilometres to the East from Suomussalmi. On the Rebol'sk and Petrozavodsk directions there was reconnoitring activity. On the Karelian Isthmus an occasional exchange of artillery fire took place. In view of the bad weather air activity was limited."

On subsequent days the reports were again short, recording nothing of importance, but on January 14, 1940, *Izvestia* published a more lengthy report regarding the second three weeks fighting. This report was as usual almost ignored by the British Press. It read :

" During the second three-week period there were no substantial changes in the front. Whilst during the first three weeks important operations took place which ended in the establishment of a *place d'armes* for Soviet troops on Finnish territory, in the second three-weeks operations, in most cases, were limited to ordinary clashes of reconnoitring detachments and to the activity of small infantry units.



" The heavy cold which suddenly set in was a considerable advantage for the Finnish troops, but the latter proved incapable of profiting efficiently therefrom.

" However, the foreign Press, especially the French Press, and primarily the French ' Havas ' agency managed, during this period, to develop, on paper, extensive field operations fabricating slanderous inventions regarding the Soviet troops.

" Whilst having no time to waste in refuting daily all these slanderous fabrications, Headquarters consider that it will not be devoid of interest to sum up from time to time the slanderous campaign carried on by these gentlemen and to expose their real nature.

(1) " Foreign agencies referring to mythical ' sources ' in Geneva, Helsinki, and Riga assert—indeed they shout themselves hoarse—that Finnish troops have broken through the front in all directions, crossed the Soviet frontier and are waging operations on U.S.S.R. territory. This is an utter lie, and a childish, senseless, laughable lie at that.

" In reality the Finnish troops have not reached the Soviet frontiers in any direction. As a matter of fact, they would hardly have set themselves such a task. In the Viborg direction the Finnish troops are 70 kilometres from the Soviet frontier ; in the Serdobol direction, 80 kilometres ; in the Petsamo direction, south of Petsamo, 130 kilometres ; in the Uleaborg direction, towards Rovaniemi, 120 kilometres, and in the direction of Suomussalmi, 10 to 15 kilometres.

(2) " Foreign agencies, especially the ' Havas ' agency, referring to the same ' sources,' alleged that in the fighting in the Suomussalmi area, the 44th Soviet Division ' lost 14,000 men.'

" This allegation is due to the supernatural fantasy of its ill-starred authors. The 44th Division had in all no more than 10,000 men at the front, how could it lose 14,000 men ? Actually the Soviet casualties there did not exceed 900 men and these casualties were due more to the cold which set in so suddenly rather than to the activities

of the Finnish troops. At the same time the foreign agencies carefully omit to report the fact that the Finnish troops lost at least 2,000 killed and wounded in these battles. They also failed to record the fact that members of the Finnish Schutz Corps brutally killed their wounded in order not to leave 'tongues' in the hands of the Soviet troops.

(3) "Referring to the same 'sources' foreign agencies allege that the Finnish troops have cut communications along the Murmansk railway and that this line was now 'completely paralysed.' This is simply another lie, as is evident from the following facts :

"As stated above, the Finnish troops have not reached the Soviet frontier at any single point, the Finnish troops are dozens of kilometres distant from the Soviet frontiers and hundreds of kilometres from the Murmansk railway. In reality the Murmansk railway has not suspended work for a single minute.

(4) "The same foreign agencies referring to the same mythical 'sources' unknown to anybody allege that 'the Russians lost Petsamo'; that 'the Russians called Germans to their assistance'; that 20 or 40 or 140 'German military instructors arrived in the U.S.S.R. for the reorganisation of the Soviet troops.'

"We find it necessary to declare that this extraordinary story exceeds in its falsehood all other chatter by the gentlemen of the foreign agencies.

"Since December 1, 1939, Petsamo has been in the hands of the Soviet troops. Soviet troops jointly with the units of the 1st Finnish People's Corps, which recently arrived at Petsamo, not only occupied the latter but have advanced 130 kilometres south of Petsamo.

"As to 'the German military instructors' who are alleged to have arrived in the U.S.S.R. 'for the reorganisation of the Soviet troops' we think it embarrassing even to deny this fantastic stupid prattle.

"We think that only an animal fear of a military bloc between the U.S.S.R. and Germany could have induced

the gentlemen of the French Agency to invent this stupid, extraordinary, falsehood.

"We appreciate the fact that the masters of the foreign agencies have instructed the latter to carry on an agitation against the Soviet troops, and they are conducting this 'propaganda' by means of a heap of fabrications in order to justify their existence. But what is the value of propaganda based not on facts but on deceit? Does not the propaganda of the saviours of civilisation consist simply in systematically leading public opinion astray? We had not thought that the representatives of the foreign press could have fallen so low."

During the rest of January the Soviet's official reports were for the most part confined to from one to twelve lines stating either that nothing much was happening at the front or mentioning some minor fighting on the ground or in the air. On January 18, however, the Soviet press also published a vigorous denial from the Headquarters of the Leningrad Military District of the allegations that Soviet aeroplanes had bombed non-military objects in Finland.

They also denied a German report that the frozen body of Vinogradov—the commander of the Soviet 44th Division had been found by the Finns in the Suomussalmi sector. "This," said the Soviet statement "is untrue. Actually the Commander of the Division, Vinogradov, is in the area of operation of the 44th Division."

As we pointed out in Chapter III, December and January were devoted by the U.S.S.R. to preparing for the assault on the Mannerheim Line—hence the fighting was only of a minor character and calculated mainly to distract the attention of the Finns from the preparation for the real fight which was to come in February. The Soviets evidently thought it unnecessary to spend much time, ink and paper on reporting at length the

comparatively unimportant, whilst the important preparations were necessarily carried out in secret.

During the early part of February the Soviet reports continued to be for the most part very laconic, but beginning with February 11, the Soviets claimed more and more definite gains of fortified Finnish positions.

Mr. Geoffrey Cox in his *The Red Army Moves*, published 15 months after the conclusion of hostilities pointed out that the attack on the Mannerheim Line began on February 1, 1940, and that the main attack on the Summa front was launched on February 10. He continued :

" On February 13 the break came. Officers holding this sector had been told that they must remain till they had lost threequarters of their effectives. Close to Summa a reserve battalion, brought up to the line only the day before to replace troops worn down by the fortnight of shelling, gave way and retreated. But through the gap they left the Russians poured in every man and tank they could summon. By evening they had definitely forced a gap in the line. Radio Moscow announced that night that they had captured sixteen Finnish concrete fortifications. This meant a break of some half a mile in the line. Into this gap the Finnish High Command hurled their crack regiment, the Tavast Light Horse, now dismounted and serving as an infantry unit. They fought throughout the days of February 14 and 15 till they were almost completely wiped out. Other counter-attacks failed, and the Russian advance swept on, regardless of their casualties. Every night the front-line Russian troops were relieved by others, who carried on the terrific pressure. These were the tactics laid down by Voroshilov, the crescendo offensive, the ever-increasing pressure. By February 15 it was clear that the line was breached and that the Finns must retire."

It is particularly instructive to compare the Russian and Finnish communiqués and reports respecting these

critical and decisive events. The Soviet success at Summa was represented by the Finnish High Command as of such little importance that on the evening of February 13 the *Daily Herald's* Helsinki correspondent cabled :

"After a 13-day battering by the might of Stalin's Army, Finland's tired troops can report to-night : ' They have not passed.'

"At not a single point has the vital Mannerheim Line been broken.

"On the contrary, a few advanced machine-gun posts abandoned by the Finns last week have been recaptured." —(February 14, 1940.)

On the same evening the B.U.P. correspondent cabled from the Finnish capital :

"Although the Finns admit that they have evacuated a few advance posts in the Summa sector, they say their main lines are intact.

"Most of the evacuated positions were machine-gun posts on the edge of No-Man's Land. And several points were regained by Finnish counter-attacks after the full force of the Red offensive had broken against the main Finnish lines."—(*Daily Express*, February 14, 1940.)

The Finnish war communiqué dated February 14, 1940, stated :

"In the area east of Summa the enemy succeeded in capturing a few of our most advanced gun positions, but his advance was stopped in front of our gun positions further back."—(*Daily Telegraph*, February 15, 1940.)

On the evening of the same day *The Times* correspondent cabled from Helsinki :

"The Finnish Army headquarters have announced that yesterday ' the enemy succeeded in capturing a few of our most advanced gun positions ' in the area eastward of Summa, but, the announcement adds, his advance was checked before the gun positions situated further back,

and at all other points the attacks were repulsed with heavy enemy losses. Thousands of killed and dozens of tanks are left before the Finnish lines, and the battle continues.

"Informed circles here point out that although these losses of a few positions must be deplored they have not any great importance. . . .

"The hard-pressed defenders still hold everything essential in the Isthmus defences, which to-day are not weaker than they were yesterday, and the Finns are confidently determined to hold all vital positions until the attackers grow tired of hurling themselves forward to augment the numerous piles of Russian dead."—  
(February 15, 1940.)

On the same day the *News Chronicle* carried the following :

"The Finnish war communiqué last night admitted that the Red Army, in its 13 days' onslaught against the Mannerheim Line, had succeeded in occupying advanced posts east of Summa.

"There, stated the official communiqué, the Soviet advance had been halted. In all other places the enemy was repulsed with heavy losses, leaving thousands of dead and scores of destroyed tanks.

"Unofficially it is reported that the Red Army offensive has slowed down."

And the *Daily Telegraph* published from its Helsinki correspondent: "Only that sector in front of Summa which has no natural defences, has been forced to yield to the intolerable pounding of the Russian artillery."

Compare these reports with those issued by the Soviet authorities and the press cables from Moscow to London. The Soviet communiqué declared :

"During February 14, patrol activities proceeded along the front and in a number of districts there was intensive activity on the part of the infantry troops and artillery.



"On the Karelian Isthmus successful operations on the part of our troops are continuing. The enemy unable to withstand the blows of our troops are retiring with considerable losses. As a result of successful action on February 14, our troops have occupied 16 enemy defensive fortified points, 8 being reinforced concrete artillery forts.

"Our aviation successfully raided enemy troops and military objectives. It also made a number of reconnaissance flights."

The communiqué issued on the following day stated :

"During February 15 the Soviet troops continued their successful actions on the Karelian Isthmus. The enemy are retreating to the rear, abandoning arms and war material and suffering serious losses. Our troops approached Kyamyarya Station. Soviet troops yesterday occupied 53 defensive fortifications, including 21 reinforced concrete artillery forts. In other sectors there was patrol activity and in a number of areas clashes of infantry units. Soviet planes successfully raided the enemy's troops and military objectives. Six enemy aeroplanes were brought down in air combats."

And on the evening of February 14, 1940, the *News Chronicle* correspondent cabled from Moscow :

"During the past four days the Red Army engaged on the Karelian front have captured 79 reinforced concrete fortifications, of which about half are armed with artillery and the rest with machine guns.

"While the communiqués remain terse, numerous articles describing the acts of soldiers who have been decorated give the discriminating reader an idea of what is happening on the front which foreign journalists are still not allowed to approach. . . .

"The campaign is now entering on its third phase. This is the phase of well-organised, well-planned attack. Then comes well-established communications.

"The third phase is also on the basis of serious damage inflicted by aviation on Finnish communications and defences during the past month, and the fatigue of the Finnish troops."—(February 15, 1940.)

It is interesting to note that this cable was headed "Censored." However, correspondents in Helsinki were apparently led to believe that the Finnish defeat at Summa was not only not serious but was practically reversed, because on the night of February 15, *The Times'* correspondent at Helsinki cabled:

"Early this morning an authoritative explanation was given in Helsinki of the expression 'gun positions,' used in the English announcement from Army headquarters yesterday. Their capture did not mean that the enemy had penetrated anywhere through the Finnish artillery. Only a short stretch of front line trenches east of Summa was occupied by the attacking forces and to-day unofficial news has been received that the Finnish troops have recaptured this stretch by a brilliant counter-attack. It has not yet been possible to verify this report."

On Sunday, February 18, the *News Chronicle* correspondent cabled from Moscow:

"Russian troops have thrust through on the Mannerheim Line front to within four miles of the great Finnish port of Viipuri, according to to-night's Moscow communiqué. The Red Army is building up a gigantic crescendo which observers here expect will culminate in a smashing blow this week. . . .

"Russian observers are certain a big break-through is coming very soon."—(*News Chronicle*, February 19, 1940.)

The Soviets continued to report advances and the capture of important enemy points. On Monday, February 19, 1940, the Soviet Military Headquarters issued the following communiqué:

"Our offensive on the Karelian Isthmus developed successfully yesterday. Hard pressed by our troops the

enemy continued to retreat. Our troops reached the River Salmenicaity, between Lakes Vuoksi and Juamampaa and occupied the fortified area and village of Muolaa, Summa Station on the coastal railway, 10 kilometres south of Viborg and the town of Johannas, and Maksalahti Station, also on the coastal railway, thus reaching the western coast of the Gulf of Finland, north of Bjoerkoe Island.

"On Saturday and yesterday our troops captured 313 defensive fortifications, including 41 reinforced concrete artillery forts. From February 11 to 18 inclusive, our troops captured altogether 475 defensive fortifications including 92 reinforced concrete artillery forts.

"In the other sectors no important changes. Our planes acted against enemy troops and military objectives. 21 enemy planes were brought down in air combats."

Here was a record of rapid and sustained effort and an expectation of still greater gains.

But Helsinki was sending out very different reports and stories. On the night of February 17, Mannerheim, in a proclamation to his troops, declared:

"You may rest assured that the enemy will never succeed in breaking our lines if, in their depths, we defend these new positions, against which the enemy's forces will expend their blood.

"Our people are no longer carrying on the fight alone. Foreign help has already arrived in an appreciable degree, and fresh numbers are constantly streaming to our standard.

"Finnish soldiers, the situation as it is developing offers us every prospect of success."—(*Observer*, February 18, 1940.)

Next evening the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent in Helsinki cabled:

"To-night's Finnish communiqué, which announced the weakening of Russian pressure on the Mannerheim

Line, stated that, except for local skirmishes and air activity, the day passed quietly. Many tanks were destroyed.

"In the Suvanto district and at Taipale, at the Lake Ladoga end of the Mannerheim Line, there was the usual artillery activity.

"Finnish forces on the north-east coast of Lake Ladoga repulsed Russian attacks and captured some strong points. They took eight guns and also automatic weapons and other arms. Three tanks and about 70 convoy vehicles were destroyed. The Russians, the communiqué added, left 570 dead on the field."—(February 19, 1940.)

On the same night the *News Chronicle* correspondent cabled from the Finnish capital :

"The great battle of the Karelian Isthmus, in which the Red Army has exerted itself to the utmost in an attempt to shatter the Mannerheim Line, seems at last to be drawing to an inconclusive end."—(February 19, 1940.)

Sometimes weather or other conditions hampered progress. This was disclosed in the Soviet communiqués together with their successes. The communiqué dated February 25, 1940, reported :

"On February 24, a heavy snowfall and fog handicapped the operations of troops on the Karelian Isthmus. Soviet troops occupied on the front 28 enemy defensive fortifications, including 19 iron and concrete artillery forts. While fighting the Soviets occupied the Islands of Koivisto, Tiurinsaara and Piisaari which are strongly fortified with iron and concrete forts ; 22 guns, including 12 heavy coastal guns, 10 in. and 6 in. tower guns, field and zenith guns and a great number of heavy machine guns and dumps of ammunition were captured on these islands. On other sectors of the front nothing of importance. Owing to unfavourable weather Soviet aircraft only carried out reconnaissance flights."

And on the same day *The Times* correspondent in Moscow cabled: "The harsh winter and Finland's geographical situation have, it is admitted, helped the Finns to delay for a short time the inevitable end." (February 26, 1940.)

However, the next Soviet communiqué dated February 26, 1940, stated:

"On February 25, Soviet troops breaking through the enemy's fortified zones occupied 28 defensive fortifications, including eight iron and concrete artillery forts. The enemy repeatedly attempted to counter-attack, but was repulsed, suffering heavy losses. On other sectors of the front nothing important. Soviet aviation successfully bombed enemy troops in a number of areas. Ten enemy aeroplanes were brought down in air combats."

And the communiqué of the following day read:

"On February 26 in the Karelian Isthmus, our troops continued to destroy enemy fortifications. The enemy attempted to counter-attack, but was repulsed, suffering heavy losses. In one counter-attack five enemy tanks were damaged, three of them were captured by Soviet troops. According to supplementary data, in addition to the trophies mentioned in the communiqué of February 24, the Soviet troops captured in the Koivisto Island (Bierke) 26 of the enemy's defensive fortifications, including 15 iron and concrete artillery forts. They also captured two fort casemates, four stores of ammunition and provisions, 10,000 shells and over 5,000,000 cartridges. On other sectors of the front nothing of importance. Soviet aviation raided enemy troops and military objectives; 19 enemy planes were brought down in air combats."

All this meant that after a comparatively short lull due to the weather, the Red Army continued to make steady and important progress, but the Finnish

communiqués disclosed little evidence of this. Thus, the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent cabled from Helsinki :

"According to to-day's Finnish headquarters communiqué, 18 Russian tanks were destroyed and large quantities of infantry arms were captured. The Finnish line was penetrated during the fighting and the gaps were then closed by machine-gun traverses from Finnish strong points."—(February 28, 1940.)

On the same date the Finnish paper *Uusi Aura* stated :

"This attack of 50 against one, this war by a numerically immensely superior enemy against our small nation, is not yet half fought. Perhaps it has only just begun."—(*News Chronicle*, February 28, 1940.)

The Soviet communiqué dated March 1, declared :

"Soviet troops have reached the point two kilometres south of Viipuri. On February 29, Soviet troops successfully continued to develop their offensive on the Karelian Isthmus. They occupied the Viborg-Valkjärvi Railway Line and stations at Jayuryapaa, Kheinjoki, Pero (nine kilometres to the east of Viborg), also the little town of Ala-Syainio and the datchas (country houses) on the eastern shore of Viborg Bay, two kilometres south of Viborg. On February 28 and 29, the Soviet troops captured 270 enemy defensive fortifications (in addition to the 42 mentioned in yesterday's communiqué), including 66 reinforced concrete artillery forts. On the other sectors no important changes. The Soviet Air Force destroyed 36 enemy planes on the ground and in air combats."

The Soviet gains coupled with the fact that the pressure was fully maintained must have convinced the Finns that the end was approaching, yet on the same day their censor passed the following messages from Helsinki :

"There has been no information yet to indicate that the situation of the Finnish defenders is in any sense



desperate, even though they have been forced to yield ground which it was painful to yield.

"It is well to remember that Viborg is neither the strategic nor the political capital of Finland and that Helsinki is 150 miles from Viborg."—(*Daily Telegraph*, March 2, 1940.)

"There are at last, however, signs that the Red Army leaders are beginning to be alarmed at the inroads which the stubborn resistance of the Finns has made on their reserves."—(*News Chronicle*, March 2, 1940.)

It is instructive to compare the Finnish and Soviet communiqués dated March 8. The Finnish read :

"On the Isthmus enemy pressure against the north-west shore of the Bay of Viipuri continued on March 7. Fighting on the capes at the mouth of the bay lasted until evening with our troops still holding their positions. Attacks on our positions on the islands were repulsed. Our artillery destroyed several tanks and at least eight guns of the batteries brought by the enemy on to the ice.

"Between the Bay of Viipuri and Vuoksi the enemy launched several local attacks which were repelled. Seven tanks and two armoured cars were destroyed in these attacks.

"In the direction of Paakkola over 400 enemy dead were left lying in front of our lines after the fighting of the previous day. South of Vuosalmi the enemy attempted to advance across the Vuoksi, but was beaten back. An attempt to attack at Taipale was repelled.

"North-east of Lake Ladoga the enemy attacked at Kollaanjoki, but was beaten off. About 2,000 enemy dead remained on the field.

"On other sections of the land front there were artillery and local attacks which were repelled.

"A couple of enemy detachments again tried to advance over the ice in the direction of Haapasaari and Virolahti Archipelago, but they were driven off.

"Our aircraft continued reconnaissance and bombing flights. Close packed enemy units, transport vehicles, tank and troop columns, and artillery batteries crowded on the islands and the ice of the Bay of Viipuri were bombed and machine-gunned.

"Enemy aerial activity was concentrated chiefly at Kotka and the Bay of Viipuri area. It was confirmed that six enemy planes were shot down and there were two unconfirmed cases. Another enemy plane yesterday was found shot down."—(*Manchester Guardian*, March 9, 1940.)

The Soviet communique stated :

"During March 7 nothing of importance happened at the front. In the northern direction our troops occupied the town of Nautsi, 153 kilometres south of Petsamo.

"West of the town of Pitkäranta, on the northern shore of Lake Ladoga, our troops occupied four islands, Maksimansaari, Peteiasaari, Paimionsaari and Khonkasaari.

"Our aircraft successfully bombed enemy troops. Fifteen enemy planes were brought down in air combat."

The Finnish communiqué would lead one to believe that no territorial gains had been made by the Red Army, although they never had the temerity actually to deny the fact and subsequent events confirmed that the Soviet claims were justified.

The Soviet communique covering events of March 10, 1940, stated :

"On March 10, nothing of importance occurred on the front. In the Viborg Bay, our troops occupied the Island Varie-Saara. On the western shore of the Bay our troops occupied the town of Nissalakhti (Northern). To the west of the town of Pitkäranta on Lake Ladoga our troops occupied Vuoratsu. In the area of the Station Loimola on the Suojarvi-Serdobol Railway intensive reconnoitring took place.

"Our aviation attacking enemy troops and military objectives brought down eight enemy planes."

And on the evening of that date *The Times* correspondent cabled from Helsinki :

"Fighting continued with unabated fury in Viipuri Bay, where the Finnish High Command had stated that the enemy has obtained restricted footing on the north-west shore and has captured some islands. On the other side of the Bay his attempts to advance towards Viipuri have failed and the Finns still hold their positions."— (March 11, 1940.)

The Soviet communiqué relating to March 11 declared :

"Soviet troops to-day closed their circles round Viborg.

"Occupied the Eastern and Northern parts of the town.

"On the Western shore of Viborg Bay Soviet troops are advancing successfully.

"Infantry clashes in the area of Loimola Station and Suojarvi-Serdobol Railway.

"Soviet aviation acted against the enemy's military objectives and brought down five planes."

But the Finnish communiqué referring to the same day stated :

"On the north-west shore of the Bay of Viipuri enemy pressure continued yesterday. In some places they succeeded in advancing a little.

"East of Viipuri Russian attacks were repulsed everywhere except in the direction of Pali, where fighting continues. In the direction of Paakkola (in the centre of the Isthmus) powerful Finnish troops repulsed enemy attempts to advance on the ice at Vuoksi. Near Ayrapaa Finnish artillery scattered enemy storm troops. Between

Vuosalmi and Lake Ladoga there was patrol activity and harassing fire from artillery.”—(*Manchester Guardian*, March 13, 1940.)

The communiqué proceeded to speak of Soviet attacks north-east of Lake Ladoga which “were repulsed” and referring to air activities claimed to have brought down 15 Soviet planes. If the Finnish communiqué was accurate, the Red Army was registering very little progress.

The last Finnish communiqué makes interesting reading when one bears in mind that by this time the Finns, according to all the available evidence, were wholly incapable of continuing the fighting. It read—we give it in full, this last effort of those who drafted it surely deserves this compliment:—

“ARMY HIGH COMMAND COMMUNIQUE,  
MARCH 13, 1940—NOON

“ARMY.

“On March 12 the enemy launched several attacks on the north-west shore of the Bay of Viipuri, all of which had been beaten back by counter-attacks by the morning of March 13. Twelve tanks were destroyed. About 60 tanks put out of action by us during the past few days of fighting have been abandoned by the enemy on the ice of the bays of the rivers Mahujoki and Vilajoki. Enemy attacks on the suburbs of Viipuri were repelled. Between Viipuri and the Vuoksi the enemy made local attacks, but was thrown back everywhere, at some points by counter-attacks in the night. In the direction of Paakkola our artillery broke up an enemy attempt at an attack. In the Vuosalmi area a fierce infantry and artillery battle raged all day. Enemy attacks were repelled and three tanks destroyed. Between Vuosalmi and Lake Ladoga harassing artillery activity. At Taipale an enemy attack was repelled. North-east of Lake Ladoga enemy attacks were repulsed at Uomas and Kollaanjoki. At Kuhmo the

enemy launched several attacks, which were all repelled. On other sections of the land front patrol activity. On the morning of March 13 the enemy continued to attack and our troops to counter-attack on the Isthmus, north-east of Lake Ladoga and at Kuhmo up to 11 a.m. when both sides ceased hostilities."

"AIR FORCE.

"On March 12 enemy aerial activity was directed chiefly against Northern Finland, where Kemijarvi, Pelkosenniemi and certain other localities were bombed. According to confirmed reports our anti-aircraft arm shot down four enemy planes, in addition to which the fate of three other planes is uncertain. Of the unconfirmed cases reported on March 12, four have been confirmed by the discovery of the wreckage of the planes. On March 13 our own aircraft went out of action at 10 a.m., having previously carried out several flights. According to the reports received by noon, the enemy dropped bombs this morning at least on Rovaniemi and Kemijarvi, causing injuries to three civilians."—(*The Red Army Moves*, by Geoffrey Cox, pp. 230/1.)

This communiqué—apart from the words "up to 11 a.m. when both sides ceased hostilities"—sounded as though the Finns were winning the war.

The last two communiqués of the Soviet Army Headquarters were much shorter and we venture to say much more to the point. Here they are: "On March 12, nothing of importance occurred on the Front."—(*Izvestia*, March 13, 1940.)

"On March 13 at 7 a.m. our troops after a two hours' attack occupied the town of Viborg."

"On other parts of the front nothing of importance took place up to 12 o'clock noon. At 12 noon by Leningrad time all hostilities ceased on all fronts in accordance with the Peace Treaty."—(*Pravda*, March 14, 1940.)

Finally we may ask : " Did the campaign in any way shake the stability of the Soviet Government as was freely alleged in the early days of the conflict ? The reply was given in a cable from Moscow, March 13, 1940, by Gordon Kashin : " Those foreign commentators who stated that Stalin made a fatal mistake in Finland have been proved wrong."—(*News Chronicle*, March 14, 1940.)

Furthermore, did the Soviet Government forget its socialist convictions and use its press, etc., to develop a spirit of jingoism ? The reply was given in the same cable :

" The people of Moscow express genuine joy. Meetings in factories and offices throughout the country are hailing the Peace Treaty with genuine enthusiasm. One hears no expressions of hostility towards the Finns. The great Russian people forget their hostility quickly, and having had more than their share of war during the last generation they value peace highly."

This was underlined next day by the *Daily Telegraph's* special correspondent in Moscow : " No public ceremonies of rejoicing have been held here or elsewhere over Finland's capitulation. There is no show of bunting and no parades. The only celebrations so far have been the private meetings in factories and offices addressed by party members."—(*Daily Telegraph*, March 15, 1940.)

The foregoing proves very clearly that as in the darkest days of the civil war, the Soviet Government told its own people and the world at large the sober truth during the Soviet-Finnish hostilities of December, 1939, to March, 1940.



## APPENDIX

The following were the terms of the Soviet-Finnish Treaty of March 12, 1941 :—

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., on the one side, and

The President of the Republic of Finland, on the other side,

guided by a desire to put an end to the hostilities that arose between the two countries and to create stable mutual peaceful relations,

convinced that the definition of the exact conditions ensuring mutual security, including the security of the cities of Leningrad and Murmansk, as well as the Murmansk Railway, corresponds to the interests of both Contracting Parties,

have found it necessary to conclude a Peace Treaty for these purposes and have appointed their authorised representatives :

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. :

Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the U.S.S.R. and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs ;

Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov, member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. ;

Alexander Mikhailovich Vasilevsky, Brigade Commander ;

The President of the Republic of Finland :

Risto Ryti, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Finland ;

Juho Kusti Paasikivi, Minister ;

Karl Rudolph Walden, General ;

Vaino Voionmaa, Professor.

The above authorised representatives, upon mutual presentation of their credentials, found in due form and good order, have agreed upon the following :

## ARTICLE I

Hostilities between the U.S.S.R. and Finland shall cease immediately in accordance with the procedure provided for in the Protocol appended to this Treaty.

## ARTICLE II

The State frontier between the U.S.S.R. and the Republic of Finland shall be established along a new line in accordance with which the territory of the U.S.S.R. will include the entire Karelian Isthmus with the town of Viborg (Viipuri) and Viborg Bay with the Islands, the western and northern shores of Lake Ladoga with the towns of Kexholm, Sortavala, Suojarvi, a number of islands in the Gulf of Finland, the territory east of Merkjarvi, with the town of Kuolajarvi, part of the Peninsulas of Rybachi and Sredni—in accordance with the map appended to this Treaty.

A more detailed description of the frontier line will be established by a mixed commission of representatives of the Contracting Parties, which commission must be formed within ten days from the date of the signing of the present Treaty.

## ARTICLE III

Both Contracting Parties undertake mutually to refrain from any attack upon each other and not to conclude any alliances or participate in coalitions directed against one of the Contracting Parties.

## ARTICLE IV

The Republic of Finland expresses consent to lease to the Soviet Union for 30 years for an annual payment by the Soviet Union of 8,000,000 Finnish marks the Peninsula of Hango and the waters surrounding it within a radius of five miles south and east, and three miles west and north of the Peninsula, and a number of islands adjacent to it, in accordance with the appended map, for the purpose of establishing a naval base there capable of defending the entrance to the Gulf of Finland from aggression; for the purpose of protecting the naval base, the Soviet Union is granted the right to maintain there, at her own expense, land and air armed forces of the necessary strength.

Within ten days from the date when this Treaty enters into force, the Government of Finland shall withdraw all its troops from the Peninsula of Hango, and the Peninsula of Hango, together with the adjacent islands, shall pass under the administration of the U.S.S.R. in accordance with this article of the Treaty.

#### ARTICLE V

The U.S.S.R. undertakes to withdraw her troops from the Petsamo Region, voluntarily ceded to Finland by the Soviet State in accordance with the Peace Treaty of 1920.

Finland undertakes, as provided by the Peace Treaty of 1920, not to maintain in the waters along her coast on the Arctic Ocean naval and other armed ships, excepting armed ships of less than 100 tons displacement, which Finland has the right to maintain without restriction, she also has the right to maintain not more than 15 naval and other armed ships of a tonnage not exceeding 400 tons each.

Finland undertakes, as was provided by the same Treaty, not to maintain in the said waters any submarines or armed aircraft.

Finland similarly undertakes, as was provided by the same Treaty, not to establish on that coast military ports, naval bases or navy repair shops of greater capacity than necessary for the above-mentioned ships and their armaments.

#### ARTICLE VI

As provided by the Treaty of 1920, the Soviet Union and her citizens are granted the right of unrestricted transit across the Petsamo Region to Norway and back. The Soviet Union is granted the right to establish a Consulate in the Petsamo Region.

Freights in transit across the Petsamo Region from the U.S.S.R. to Norway, as likewise freights in transit across the same region from Norway to the U.S.S.R., are exempted from inspection and control, excepting only such control as is necessary for regulating transit communications. The said freights are also exempted from customs duties, transit and other fees.

The above-mentioned control of transit freights is permitted only in the form observed in similar cases in accordance with established usages in international communications.

Citizens of the U.S.S.R. travelling across the Petsamo Region to Norway and back from Norway to the U.S.S.R. have the right of unrestricted transit passage on the basis of passports issued by the Soviet departments concerned.

Soviet unarmed aircraft have the right to maintain an air service between the U.S.S.R. and Norway across the Petsamo Region with observance of general operating rules.

#### ARTICLE VII

The Government of Finland grants the Soviet Union the right of transit of goods between the U.S.S.R. and Sweden, and with the aim of developing this transit along the shortest railway route, the U.S.S.R. and Finland find it necessary to build, if possible in the course of 1940, each party on its territory, a railway line connecting the town of Kandalaksha with the town of Kemijarvi.

#### ARTICLE VIII

When this Treaty comes into force, economic relations between the Contracting Parties will be restored, and with this end in view, the Contracting Parties will start negotiations for the conclusion of a trade treaty.

#### ARTICLE IX

The present Peace Treaty comes into force immediately upon signature and is subject to subsequent ratification.

The exchange of instruments of ratifications shall take place in the city of Moscow within ten days.

The present Treaty is done in two originals, in the Russian, Finnish and Swedish languages each, in the city of Moscow on March 12, 1940.

V. MOLOTOV.

A. ZHDANOV.

A. VASILEVSKY.

RISTO RYTI.

J. PAASIKIVI.

R. WALDEN.

VAINO VOIONMAA.

A Protocol appended to the Treaty read as follows :—

The Contracting Parties fix the following procedure for the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of troops beyond the State frontier established by the Treaty :

1. Both sides cease hostilities at noon, Leningrad time, March 13, 1940.

2. A neutral zone one kilometre in width is to be established between the lines occupied by the advance units as from the hour fixed for the cessation of hostilities, and in course of the first day the army units which, in accordance with the new State frontier, find themselves on the territory of the other side, shall be withdrawn one kilometre.

3. The withdrawal of the troops beyond the new State frontier shall be commenced at 10 a.m., March 15, 1940, along the entire frontier from the Gulf of Finland to Lieksa, and at 10 a.m. on March 16 north of Lieksa. The withdrawal shall be effected by daily marches of not less than seven kilometres in 24 hours, while the advance of the troops of the other side is to be effected in such wise that the rear units of the troops that are being withdrawn and the advance units of the troops of the other side that are being moved up toward the new frontier shall be separated by a distance of not less than seven kilometres.

4. The following time limits are fixed for the withdrawal in accordance with Paragraph 3 on various sections of the State frontier :

(a) In the section from the sources of the Tuntisajoki River, Kuolajarvi, Takala, Eastern shore of Lake Joukamojarvi the withdrawal of the troops of both sides is to be completed by 8 p.m., March 20, 1940 :

(b) In the section to the south of Kuhmoniemi in the district of Latva the withdrawal of the troops is to be completed by 8 p.m., March 22, 1940 :

(c) In the section of Longavaara, Vartsila, Matkaselka Station the withdrawal of the troops of both sides is to be completed by 8 p.m., March 26, 1940 :

(d) In the section of Matkaselka Station, Koitsanlahti the withdrawal of the troops is to be completed by 8 p.m., March 22, 1940 :

(e) In the section of Koitsanlahti, Enso Station the withdrawal of the troops is to be completed by 8 p.m., March 25, 1940 :

(f) In the section of Enso Station, Bate Island, the withdrawal of the troops is to be completed by 8 p.m., March 19, 1940.

5. The evacuation of the Red Army troops from the Petsamo area is to be completed by April 10, 1940.

6. During the withdrawal of the troops beyond the State frontier, the Commands on both sides bind themselves to take the necessary measures for the preservation of towns and localities that pass to the other side, and to take appropriate measures to safeguard against damage and destruction of cities, small towns, and structures of defensive and economic significance (bridges, dams, aerodromes, barracks, storehouses, railway junctions, industrial enterprises telegraph communications, power stations).

7. All questions that may arise in the course of the transfer by one side to the other of areas, points, towns and other objectives mentioned in Paragraph 6 of this Protocol, shall be settled by representatives of both sides on the spot, for which purpose special delegates shall be appointed by the Commands on each main road of movement of both armies.

8. Exchanges of prisoners of war shall be effected in the shortest possible time after the cessation of hostilities on the basis of a special agreement.







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